



**Sample Pages from
Hansel and Gretel**

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HANSEL AND GRETEL

A FAIRY TALE IN ONE ACT BY
Shirley Barrie



Hansel and Gretel

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Characters

Hansel – a boy

Gretel – his younger sister

Mother

Father

Witch

Puppets

(at least two puppeteers)

See Appendix for further puppet descriptions

Hansel	Waft of Aroma
Gretel	Hair Brush
Large Crooked Red Rimmed Eye	Cloth
Piece of Cake dripping with Fruit	Pillows
Bowl of Ice Cream	Fluffy Blanket
Small Version of White Bird	Crescent Moon
Large Version of White Bird	Huge Bowl of Chocolate Pudding
Little Gingerbread House	White Duck
Sun	

Live percussionist(s)

To accompany the rhythmic speaking sequences and to build a soundscape.

Settings

See Appendix for further setting descriptions

Backdrop of a forest with trees in front.

The edge of the forest: a run-down house in a clearing surrounded by trees.

Puppet stage for puppet sequences, preferably looking like a part of the forest.

Outside and inside the witch's gingerbread house (including a chest and an oven)

A woodshed

A large (fabric) body of water

HANSEL AND GRETEL was produced by Geordie Theatre Productions at the D.B. Clarke Theatre in Montreal from October 24 – November 2, 2003.

Hansel..... Mike Hughes
Gretel Nathalie Baroud
Father/Puppeteer..... Chip Chuipka
Mother/Witch..... Jane Wheeler
Music/Perussionist..... Shawn Mativetsky
Director Lib Spry
Stage Manager Richard Cliff

Set and Props..... Stéphane Longpré
Puppets Nelly Savova
Costumes Elizabeth Congard
Lights Ana Cappelluto

An earlier version of the script was produced by Solar Stage Children's Theatre in Toronto January 2 – 26, 2003.

Cast Kory Bertrand, Lucy Benayon,
Steven Burley and Eve Wylden
Director Roseann Wilshere
Designer..... Yesim Tosuner
Stage Manager Lindsay Nichols

A clearing surrounded by a forest of trees. Downstage on one side is the bedroom of a little rundown house. On the other side is the percussionist or percussionists. The characters enter from various directions. They speak to the audience, drawing them into the telling of a story.

FATHER: Once.

GRETEL: Once.

HANSEL: Once.

MOTHER: Once.

FATHER: Once upon...

MOTHER: Upon a...

GRETEL: A time.

HANSEL: Time,

MOTHER: Time,

FATHER: Time.

ALL FOUR: Once upon a time.

They break away from each other. MOTHER exits. GRETEL takes her ball out of her pocket. HANSEL sits on the ground by a pile of white pebbles.

FATHER: (Wearily) Once upon a time-

He picks up a pack of wood and exits. GRETEL begins to bounce her ball - not very well. HANSEL plays with the pebbles.

HANSEL: Once upon a time, there was a little house.

GRETEL catches her ball just before it goes into the forest.

GRETEL: (She's afraid of the forest) There was a little house on the edge of a biiiig forest.

HANSEL decides to bug his sister. He leaps in front of her, grabs the ball in mid-air. She comes after it. He holds it tantalizingly out of her reach, playing with her, almost letting her have it, then dancing away.

GRETEL: Hey!... You give... Don't you... Ohhhh!

She gets more and more frustrated. Stamps her foot, hurting it.

GRETEL: Ow!

She dances on one foot. HANSEL laughs.

GRETEL: You're horrible.

HANSEL: Have it then.

But he throws the ball off into the trees. GRETTEL gasps.

GRETTEL: Ohhhh!

HANSEL: What?

GRETTEL: My... my... my... ball...

HANSEL: I haven't got it.

GRETTEL: You... you... it's... you...

GRETTEL points at the woods.

HANSEL: So go get it.

GRETTEL: Not in there!!!

HANSEL: No ball then.

He goes back to playing with his pebbles.

GRETTEL: I... You...

HANSEL ignores her. She looks towards the forest. Tries to screw up her courage. Takes a step toward the forest. A puppet LARGE CROOKED RED RIMMED EYE flickers between the branches and is gone.

GRETTEL: Eyeeeeeeee!

MOTHER enters carrying a turnip.

MOTHER: Gretel, do you have to make such a frightful ruckus?

GRETTEL: Yes.

MOTHER: You do not!

GRETTEL: But he... he... my ball... eye... *(She points at the forest)*

HANSEL is trying to sneak off.

MOTHER: Stop right there, young man. *(To herself)* I don't know what possessed me to marry a man with two children.

MOTHER points at the forest. HANSEL looks worried.

HANSEL: But...

MOTHER: You don't want me to get angry, boy.

HANSEL: Come with me, Gretel.

GRETTEL: No!... eye... I saw... eye...

MOTHER: Shut your blathering, girl and get me a rag.

GRETTEL runs for a rag. HANSEL is more scared than he wants to let on.

MOTHER: Well?

HANSEL screws up his courage before gingerly stepping into the forest. MOTHER takes the rag from GRETEL and begins to brush dirt off the turnip.

MOTHER: One turnip left in the garden. One. And just look at it.

GRETEL: Wrinkles.

MOTHER: Yes. More wrinkles than the face of a great grandmother. *(She pokes it)* And soft - soft as the bog in the valley.

HANSEL bursts out of the forest at far greater speed than he went in, but he's carrying the ball.

GRETEL: You got it!

MOTHER: And that's a worm hole.

HANSEL: *(Flipping it at her casually)* No problem.

MOTHER: Fine kettle of fish. Not that we have any fish.

GRETEL: Wanna play?

HANSEL: Sure.

GRETEL throws the ball to HANSEL who's moving offstage. She follows him off.

MOTHER: *(Peering into the worm hole)* Worm's long gone. Not enough goodness to even keep a worm.

FATHER enters. He's tired, still carrying the load of wood.

MOTHER: You've still got all of the wood.

FATHER: Nobody was buying.

MOTHER: What are we going to do?

FATHER: Use the wood to cook supper.

MOTHER: What supper, you nincompoop? *(She holds up the turnip)* I had to scour the garden to find this.

FATHER exits carrying the wood.

MOTHER: And I've used the last of the flour. D'you hear me? *(She follows him)* We've got nothing left.

HANSEL comes running back on as if to catch the ball.

HANSEL: So throw it!

GRETEL: *(Off)* Too far... Hansel... can't...

HANSEL: *(Mutters)* Baby.

The PERCUSSIONIST makes a big rumbling noise. HANSEL clutches

his stomach. GRETEL enters.

GRETEL: Can't... play.

She flops down. Again there's the rumble. She scurries quickly to HANSEL.

GRETEL: What's that?

HANSEL: Tummy rumble.

GRETEL: What?

HANSEL: You're such a silly. When you're hungry your tummy rumbles.

GRETEL: I'm STARVING and my tummy doesn't...

There's another rumble. She grabs her own stomach.

GRETEL: Ohh!

HANSEL & GRETEL: Tummy Rumble

The PERCUSSIONIST begins a rhythm. The characters speak with the rhythm. Rhythmic breaks can be taken where needed to allow for the actions.

HANSEL: *Need some food*

GRETEL: *Right away*

HANSEL/GRETEL: *Tummy Rumble*

GRETEL: *End of day*

HANSEL: *Time to eat*

GRETEL: *Bring it on*

HANSEL/GRETEL: *Tummy rumble*

GRETEL: *Will be gone*

MOTHER and FATHER enter. They each carry two wooden bowls with spoons. They pass two to the children.

MOTHER: *Here's your supper*

FATHER: *Turnip stew*

MOTHER: *Some for you*

She gives a bowl to GRETEL.

FATHER: *And you*

He gives a bowl to HANSEL. HANSEL and GRETEL sniff their bowls.

HANSEL & GRETEL: *P-U!*

FATHER: *Time to eat*

*Make you grow
Tummy rumble's
Sure to go.*

GRETEL takes a distasteful bite.

GRETEL: *Turnip stew*
 HANSEL: *It's more like soup*
 MOTHER: *It's all there is*
 FATHER: *Eat up, dear group*
 HANSEL: *Need some food*
 GRETEL: *Right away*
 HANSEL/GRETEL: *Tummy Rumble*
 GRETEL: *End of day*
 FATHER: *Imagine it is
T-bone steak*
 GRETEL: *Mashed potatoes*
 MOTHER: *For goodness sake!*
 HANSEL: *A hot dog slathered
Thick with cheese*
 GRETEL: *A nice big chop
And even peas!*

*HANSEL and GRETEL begin to bang the bottom of their now empty
bowls with the spoons.*

HANSEL/GRETEL: *Want some more
Don't be slow
Tummy rumble's
Got to go
Want some more
Hungry still*
 MOTHER: *There isn't any
Zero, nil!*

This brings the banging to an abrupt stop.

FATHER: *Quickly now
Off to bed*

FATHER and MOTHER collect the bowls from the children.

FATHER: *Tummy rumble's
In your head.*

The children go offstage and re-enter through the door to their

bedroom area. MOTHER and FATHER remain in the clearing. GRETEL gets into bed, pulling the ragged blanket over her. HANSEL gets in beside her, pulling a corner of the blanket over himself. GRETEL turns over, pulling the blanket off him.

HANSEL: Greedy guts.

He pulls the blanket away from her and over himself.

GRETEL: Hey!

She pulls the blanket back. He grabs onto a corner. They struggle over the blanket.

MOTHER: We can't go on like this.

FATHER: Times could get better.

MOTHER: Or worse.

GRETEL: Stop... that.

FATHER: No. How could you suggest... No!

FATHER moves behind the house. MOTHER follows him. Back lighting causes the curtain over the window to cast large shadows of their profiles and gestures.

MOTHER: They're only going to get bigger.

HANSEL: Horrible hog.

MOTHER: And want more to eat.

FATHER: But -

GRETEL: Am not.

HANSEL: Are too.

FATHER: But they're my children.

HANSEL hears FATHER and strains toward the voice, pulling the blanket.

GRETEL: Don't... pull.

HANSEL lets go and she falls off the bed.

GRETEL: Ow.

HANSEL: *(Indicating the voices)* Shhhhh.

MOTHER: I'm not asking you to hurt them.

FATHER: But to leave them! In the forest -

GRETEL: What does he- ?

HANSEL: Shhhhhh.

They both lean closer to the voices.

FATHER: The wild animals could tear them to pieces.

GRETEL: Tear who?

HANSEL claps his hand over GRETEL's mouth.

MOTHER: You've got to be sensible. If you do nothing, we'll all die of starvation. You can use your wood to build our coffins then.

GRETEL tries to cry out.

HANSEL: Shhhh. Father won't -

FATHER: All right, my dear. All right. It pains me, but I see that there's no other way. We'll leave at dawn.

HANSEL is shocked. GRETEL breaks away.

GRETEL: Are they... Talking -

HANSEL: Shush!

MOTHER: Come to bed now.

*HANSEL and GRETEL scramble to the bed and pretend to sleep.
MOTHER and FATHER look in on the children and then go offstage.*

GRETEL: Is it... about us. Hansel? (Pause) What's happening?

HANSEL: I don't know.

GRETEL: Yes you do. They're going to take us... Leave us... Ohhhh! (She's about to wail)

HANSEL: Don't. Gretel. Don't cry. You'll wake them up. Go to sleep now.

GRETEL: I can't.

HANSEL: Yes, you can. (He holds up the blanket) Don't worry. I'll think of something we can do.

*He tucks her in. Then he paces. Up and down. Up and down.
GRETEL lifts up her head.*

GRETEL: Have you got a plan?

HANSEL: Not yet. But I will. Go to sleep.

She puts her head back down and takes big noisy breaths. HANSEL goes back to pacing.

HANSEL: A plan. I must think...

The heavy breathing stops.

GRETEL: Have you got the plan yet?

HANSEL: Gretel!

GRETEL: Is that the sun?

HANSEL: (*Starts. Looks. With relief.*) No.

Rhythmic talking.

GRETEL: *We're in such a fix*

HANSEL: *A terrible big jam*

GRETEL: But not the sweet kind.

HANSEL: No.

GRETEL: And not the kind that gets between your toes.

HANSEL: No.

The PERCUSSIONIST begins a rhythm.

GRETEL: *We're in a bad fix.*

HANSEL: *An awful big plight
I need a good plan*

GRETEL: *And you need it tonight.*

HANSEL: *But -
My head is a – spinning
My brain's in my knee*

GRETEL: *You've got to do something*

HANSEL: *She's counting on me.*

HANSEL/GRETEL: *We're in a bad fix*

GRETEL: *I don't want to leave home*

HANSEL: *I need a good plan
So we don't have to roam.*

GRETEL: *But
Your head is a – spinning
Your brains in -*

HANSEL: Ah! (*He smiles*)

GRETEL: What?

HANSEL tiptoes quietly towards the door.

GRETEL: What are you going to do?

HANSEL: Stay here.

GRETEL: Be careful.

HANSEL: Be quiet.

He creeps out the door. Moonlight shines in the clearing, illuminating

the pile of white pebbles. HANSEL enters the clearing, goes to the stones and stuffs them in his pockets.

HANSEL: *I've got a great plan
I'm really quite bright
A knight to the rescue
Vanquishing fright!*

HANSEL exits from the clearing, tiptoes through the door and back to the bed. GRETEL is asleep.

HANSEL: Gretel?

GRETEL: Hmmm? Plan?

HANSEL: Yes. What we'll do is -

GRETEL: Good. Plan.

She's back asleep. HANSEL shakes his head and crawls into bed beside her. Falls immediately to sleep. Sunlight fills the stage and offstage there is the sound of a rooster crowing. GRETEL bolts awake. Shakes her brother.

GRETEL: Hansel. Hansel! Wake up. It's morning and-

MOTHER: *(From off)* Children?

GRETEL immediately pretends to be asleep.

MOTHER: *(Enters through the door)* Wake up, sleepy heads.

GRETEL whines.

MOTHER: Now don't you start. *(She shakes HANSEL)* Time to get up.
We're going into the forest, aren't we, father?

FATHER enters looking reluctant.

FATHER: Oh. Yes. I suppose... *(MOTHER glares at him)* Yes.

GRETEL: I don't like the forest.

MOTHER: We're all going together, Gretel.

HANSEL: Why?

FATHER: Why?... Well...

MOTHER: To cut wood, of course. Now wipe the sleep out of your eye. There's no time to dilly dally. There's better wood, deep in the forest, isn't that right, Father?

FATHER: What? Oh. Better wood. Yes.

The children exit the house and go into the clearing.

MOTHER: *(Hisses to FATHER)* Get your axe.

GRETEL: *(Hisses to HANSEL)* Do something!

HANSEL: Not yet.

MOTHER comes into the clearing.

MOTHER: Now. Here's some food. *(She hands them each a piece of bread)* It's all there is, so put it in your pocket and don't eat it until lunchtime.

GRETEL puts hers in her pocket. HANSEL's pockets are full. He holds his bread uncertainly.

MOTHER: Not until lunchtime, Hansel. *(she turns away)*

HANSEL: Yes, ma'am. *(To GRETEL)* Psssst.

GRETEL: What?

HANSEL: Shhhh.

He puts his piece of bread in her other pocket as FATHER shoulders his axe.

GRETEL: Why are you...?

HANSEL: The plan.

GRETEL: Oh.

FATHER: Time to go.

He steps into the forest and disappears into the trees.

GRETEL: What plan?

HANSEL: Not now.

GRETEL: Tell me.

MOTHER: What's going on with you two?

HANSEL/GRETEL: Nothing.

MOTHER: Then follow your father.

The CHILDREN and MOTHER exit following FATHER. The hut is taken offstage, leaving only the trees. FATHER enters beside a different tree, peers about, then calls to the others.

FATHER: This way.

He leads the way wending a path around the trees. HANSEL enters, looks around. Kneels down and places a pebble beside a tree. Moves on. GRETEL is behind him. MOTHER follows some way behind. HANSEL looks back. When he thinks he's out of sight of MOTHER, he bends down quickly and places another pebble. GRETEL runs up to him.

GRETEL: Why are you...?

HANSEL: Shhhh.

GRETEL: What do you see?

HANSEL: Nothing.

GRETEL: Then why are you...?

HANSEL: Be quiet!

MOTHER: Will you two never stop this incessant squabbling.

She grabs GRETEL's hand and pulls her past HANSEL. GRETEL looks back. He tries to indicate to her not to turn around. They walk on. HANSEL bends down again. MOTHER looks back.

MOTHER: What are you doing now?

HANSEL: Tying my shoe.

His foot covers the pebble and he pretends to tie his shoe.

MOTHER: Well hurry up. We don't want to lose your father.

She lets go of GRETEL's hand and walks ahead following FATHER offstage. GRETEL goes back to HANSEL.

GRETEL: What's the matter with you?

HANSEL: I was tying...

GRETEL: You were not. You're supposed to save us and you're being a silly jack-in-the-box.

HANSEL: But it's...

MOTHER appears suddenly from behind a tree.

MOTHER: (Sweetly) This way children.

She leads them centre stage to a clearing. The back of the clearing is created by using the strips of fabric or flats that will serve as the puppet stage for the HANSEL and GRETEL puppets.

MOTHER: Through here. Come along.

FATHER has entered with a fire downstage.

FATHER: Here's a good place for you to wait.

HANSEL: Wait?

GRETEL: For what?

MOTHER: For us, of course.

GRETEL: Where are you going?

FATHER: Well -

MOTHER: We're going off to cut wood.

FATHER: Yes. That's right.

GRETEL: I want to come too.

MOTHER: You're too little. We're going deeper into the forest.

FATHER: You'll be safe here. I've made a fire.

GRETEL: But -

FATHER: Hansel, can I count on you to look after your sister?

GRETEL: But -

MOTHER: Come along, Father.

FATHER: Don't look so sad, the two of you. Come here.

They run to him. He hugs them tightly. MOTHER glares at him.

MOTHER: The day is passing, Father.

She picks up the axe. FATHER pushes the children away, gently.

FATHER: You're big and brave, both of you.

MOTHER: We must go. You two stay right here.

FATHER: You'll be fine.

MOTHER gives him the axe. He takes it and follows her. FATHER pauses at the edge of the forest to look back. MOTHER pulls him off.

GRETEL: What are we going to do? Hansel?

HANSEL: Stay here.

GRETEL: Like they said?

HANSEL: Yes.

He sits down.

GRETEL: Oh.

She looks around fearfully. The PERCUSSIONIST makes the sound of a tummy rumble. HANSEL rubs his tummy. GRETEL gasps and jumps. Then she recognizes the sound.

GRETEL: (Relieved) Tummy Rumble.

No percussion here.

HANSEL: Where's that bread
 Give me mine

GRETEL reaches in her pocket for the bread.

GRETEL: Here it is.

HANSEL: We'll be fine.

GRETEL: Okay... Fine... Okay.

They eat their bread. But GRETEL has one eye on the forest.

HANSEL: Sit by the fire.

GRETEL shakes her head.

HANSEL: It's warm.

GRETEL: *(she gulps)* Eye...

HANSEL: What?

GRETEL: There's eyes, Hansel.

HANSEL: Yeah. I see two.

GRETEL: Where?

HANSEL: Yours. *(He laughs)*

GRETEL: You're mean.

HANSEL: Sorry. I can't see any eyes in the forest. Okay?

GRETEL: That doesn't mean they aren't there.

HANSEL: So where are they then?

GRETEL: Don't know. But I can feel them.

*The PERCUSSIONIST makes the sound of a big tummy rumble.
GRETEL holds her stomach.*

GRETEL: Ohhhh.

HANSEL gets up and starts towards the forest.

GRETEL: Where are you going?

HANSEL: To get some wood for the fire.

GRETEL: Can't eat fire, silly. I'm hungry and I want to go hommmmmme. *(She's building to a wail)*

HANSEL: We can't.

GRETEL: Whyyyyy?

HANSEL: We don't know the way.

GRETEL: Waaaaa!

HANSEL: Not yet. Stop that! *(She doesn't)* The eyes really will get you if you keep on making that horrible noise.

GRETEL gulps into silence. She's terrified.

HANSEL: I didn't mean it, Gretel. But I can't think when you make that awful noise.

GRETEL: What are we going to do?

HANSEL: Wait.

GRETEL: Wait? That's your great big plan to save us? Wait for what? To be eaten by the wolves?

HANSEL: No.

GRETEL: To starve to death?

HANSEL: No. We wait for the moon to rise.

GRETEL: The moon? Are you... my brother is... Crazy, that's it. Nutty as a fruit cake. Ohhhhh! Cake. I'd love some...

As if in response to her imagination, a puppet PIECE OF CAKE DRIPPING WITH FRUIT appears. GRETEL reaches for it, trying to grab it, but it's always tantalizingly out of reach.

GRETEL: Mmmmm. Icing!! And cherries. Red...

HANSEL: Gretel, what is the matter with you?

The CAKE disappears.

GRETEL: *(with disappointment)* Ohhhhhhhhhh.

She sits and buries her head in her hands. Daylight fades into moonlight. HANSEL begins to peer at the ground.

HANSEL: C'mon. C'mon moon.

GRETEL: *(In a dream)* Ice cream.

A puppet BOWL OF ICE CREAM appears dancing around her head.

GRETEL: With chocolate sauce - and nuts...

HANSEL: Pleasssssse.

GRETEL: And whipped cream. Lots and lots of...

She reaches out sleepily for the bowl. HANSEL sees a couple of pebbles glow in the moonlight.

HANSEL: Yes. Yes!!!

The BOWL OF ICE CREAM disappears. GRETEL wakes up.

GRETEL: Ahh! You always spoil everything.

HANSEL: We're going home.

GRETEL: We are?

HANSEL: Yes.

GRETEL: But we don't know the way.

HANSEL: Yes we do. Look.

He points at the glowing pebble.

HANSEL: I dropped them.

GRETEL: All the way from home? You are the smartest brother, the cleverest brother, a... a... a genius brother!

She jumps on him nearly knocking him over.

HANSEL: Hey! I'm not carrying you.

*He throws her off. He exits picking up the pebbles as he goes.
GRETEL picks herself up.*

GRETEL: Hansel? Hansel!?

She puts out the fire, pretending to kick dirt over it, and turning it off if necessary.

GRETEL: Don't you leave me -. You can't -

She takes off after him.

HANSEL AND GRETEL PUPPET SEQUENCE. This takes place behind the puppet stage. PUPPET HANSEL enters from behind a tree. He stops. Looks around.

PUPPET HANSEL: Where's the next...?

A little light shines. Part of HANSEL's trail. He sees it.

PUPPET HANSEL: Ah ha! (Looks back) Hurry up, Gretel. I've found the next pebble.

He moves towards it. Reaching the light, he claps his hands, bends over and gives the little light a big loud kiss. He looks for the next pebble - moving off around a tree. PUPPET GRETEL enters. Looks around.

PUPPET GRETEL: Hansel?

PUPPET HANSEL: I'm here.

*But he's moved to the other side of the tree and she can't see him.
She comes closer to the voice. Looks around fearfully at the big trees.*

PUPPET GRETEL: Where?

PUPPET HANSEL: (Peeking out) Here.

PUPPET GRETEL: Ahhhh!

She jumps back, sits down hard on the pebble/light.

PUPPET GRETEL: Owww!

PUPPET HANSEL: What?

PUPPET GRETEL: I sat on the pebble.

PUPPET HANSEL: Really? (He giggles)

A second light glows. PUPPET GRETEL gasps.

PUPPET HANSEL: What now?

PUPPET GRETEL: I see the next stone.

She runs to it.

PUPPET GRETEL: Ta Da!

PUPPET HANSEL approaches.

PUPPET HANSEL: Well done! Now where?

They both look around. This way. That way. This way.

PUPPET HANSEL: I don't see -

PUPPET GRETEL gives a huge big yawn. She lies down on the ground.

PUPPET GRETEL: Sleeeeep.

PUPPET HANSEL can now see a third light.

PUPPET HANSEL: There!

PUPPET GRETEL: *(Starts awake)* Huh?

She puts her head up for a moment, then down again. PUPPET HANSEL jumps over PUPPET GRETEL to the stone and indicates it to her.

PUPPET HANSEL: Look.

PUPPET GRETEL drags herself towards him along the ground.

PUPPET GRETEL: Are we almost home?

PUPPET HANSEL: I don't know. *(He looks off. Points.)* But I see the next pebble. Come on.

He exits.

GRETEL: *(Big sigh)* Wait up! Hansel!!

She gets up and follows him off.

END OF PUPPET SEQUENCE.

GRETEL: *(offstage)* Wait up!!

Early morning light comes up on the hut which now is re-set at the edge of the forest. The puppet stage disappears. MOTHER is sweeping the clearing. The actor HANSEL peeks out of the trees and into the clearing. He looks back and gestures.

HANSEL: We're home.

GRETEL appears. They step into the clearing.

GRETEL: Good. So... tired.

She sinks down in a heap. MOTHER stops her work, and gazes at them.

HANSEL: Morning, Mother.

MOTHER backs away as if they're ghosts.

MOTHER: Father!!

HANSEL: Didn't you expect to see us?

MOTHER: I don't know what you mean. Father!!

FATHER enters.

FATHER: What's the matter? (*MOTHER gestures to the children*) My children!!!
(*He runs to embrace them*) I'm so glad to see you.

HANSEL: Are you?

FATHER: Yes.

MOTHER: (*Putting on a good act*) We've been very worried.

FATHER: I didn't sleep a wink.

MOTHER: We couldn't find you, you see. We feared -

FATHER: It doesn't matter now. They're both safely home.

MOTHER: Yes. How ever did you find your way?

GRETEL: Hansel dropped pebbles.

MOTHER: Pebbles?

HANSEL: I picked them up in the yard. And when we were walking into the forest, I dropped them. And the moon lit them up.

MOTHER: (*Not meaning it*) What a clever boy!

FATHER: (*To MOTHER*) It's a sign. Don't you see? Things will be better now.

MOTHER: Time will tell.

ALL FOUR: Time.

HANSEL: Time

GRETEL: Will... Time

MOTHER: Will tell.

FATHER: Time

GRETEL: A time.

She begins to play with her ball.

HANSEL: Upon a time.

He goes to the pile of pebbles but his heart isn't in it. He can't really play.

ALL FOUR: Still upon a time.

FATHER hoists the harness of wood over his shoulder and waving to them, exits. MOTHER sets up a clothesline which runs from the edge of the hut to one of the trees.

HANSEL: There was a little house.

GRETEL: On the edge of a biiiiig forest.

ALL THREE: Still upon a time -

MOTHER: There was a stepmother who could not feed the family.

She begins to hang up ragged bleached out washing on a line.

GRETEL: There was -

HANSEL: A boy -

GRETEL tries to get HANSEL to play ball with her but he refuses.

GRETEL: Who wouldn't play.

HANSEL: A girl, who -

GRETEL's ball has bounced close to the woods. A puppet LARGE RED RIMMED EYE flits between the trees. GRETEL yells loudly and backs into the wash.

MOTHER: For goodness sake.

She pushes GRETEL out of the way. FATHER re-enters with the same load of wood.

FATHER: And a father who tried and tried but -

MOTHER: You sold nothing?

FATHER: I'm sorry.

The PERCUSSIONIST starts a real chorus of tummy rumbles.

ALL FOUR: *Tummy Rumble.*

MOTHER exits.

GRETEL: *I Need some food
Right away*

HANSEL/GRETEL/FATHER: *Tummy rumble*

HANSEL: *End of day*

MOTHER enters with two wooden bowls and spoons.

MOTHER: *Here's your meal
Leftover stew*

(To GRETEL) *Some for you*
 (To HANSEL) *And you*
 (To FATHER) *Not you.*

HANSEL: *It's just warm water*

GRETEL: *Dirty, brown.*

FATHER: *Please don't complain*

MOTHER: *Just drink it down.*

GRETEL quickly empties her bowl, turns it over and bangs the bottom with the spoon.

GRETEL: *Want some more*
Don't be slow -

MOTHER: *Quiet, Gretel!*

MOTHER indicates that FATHER should follow her and they disappear behind the washing.

HANSEL: *Lucky me*
I've got a bone

GRETEL: *No you haven't*
It's just a stone.

HANSEL: *At least it's warm.*

GRETEL begins banging again without the PERCUSSIONIST.

GRETEL: *Want some more!*

HANSEL: *Warm - like mashed potatoes, dripping with dark brown gravy.*

GRETEL: *Don't be so slow.*

HANSEL: *And ketchup. A whole bottle of -*

MOTHER and FATHER appear as large shadows behind the washing.

MOTHER: *I've tried. I've really tried.*

FATHER: *I know.*

GRETEL: *Tummy rumble's*
Going to go.

GRETEL stops banging and starts licking the inside of her bowl.

MOTHER: *I can't get food out of a stone.*

HANSEL: *And then for dessert - pudding. Butterscotch!*

FATHER: *I'll go to the city to sell -*

MOTHER: *You haven't eaten. You'd collapse before you got half way there.*

HANSEL curls up in a ball as if going to sleep. GRETEL bangs the

bottom of the bowl.

GRETEL: Where oh where
 Has the food all gone?
 I could eat
 A mastodon!

MOTHER: Your way hasn't worked. We have to try mine.

GRETEL licks at her bowl, but begins to pay attention to what she hears.

FATHER: No. They're my children.

MOTHER: They're older now.

FATHER: But -

MOTHER: They'd have a chance to fend for themselves.

GRETEL: (*Hissing*) Hansellll!

HANSEL: Hmmm. Snfff. Taste. So... sweet.

GRETEL: (*Shakes HANSEL*) Wake up!

HANSEL: What?

MOTHER: You know I'm right.

GRETEL: Listen!

FATHER: Alright. We'll take them back into the forest.

MOTHER: Good.

FATHER: If there's no other way.

MOTHER: There isn't.

FATHER enters the house. MOTHER begins to take clothes off the line, surprising the shocked children.

HANSEL/GRETEL/MOTHER: Ahhhh!

MOTHER: If you've nothing to do, get the rest of this wash in.

She exits. The children take down the wash as they talk.

GRETEL: They're going to leave us. In the forest. (*HANSEL nods*) I don't like the forest.

HANSEL: I don't either.

GRETEL: But you'll find a way to get us back home.

HANSEL: Uhhhh. Sure.

GRETEL: And Father will be glad.

HANSEL: Yes.

GRETEL: Good.

She gives HANSEL all of her wash, goes into the house, enters the bedroom and gets into bed. Covers up and immediately goes to sleep. MOTHER enters the clearing and takes the clothes from HANSEL.

MOTHER: Sleep well.

HANSEL goes into the house, enters the bedroom and gets into bed.

HANSEL: So hungry. Have to stay awake. Till everyone's asleep. Sleeeeeeeep.

He falls asleep. MOTHER enters. Looks at the children.

MOTHER: There'll be none of the nonsense we had before.

That's because I will carefully lock the door.

She takes a big key out of her pocket. She goes out, quietly closing the door. The PERCUSSIONIST makes a sound as the key turns in the lock. HANSEL wakes up. Gets out of bed.

HANSEL: Have to walk. Till everyone's asleep.

He hears snores coming from offstage. He tiptoes to the door. The PERCUSSIONIST makes the sound of a door rattling as HANSEL tries to open it.

FATHER: (Muffled, offstage) Who's zat?

HANSEL runs back to the bed.

HANSEL: The door's locked. Gretel, she's locked the door. I can't get the pebbles -

GRETEL: Thas good.

She turns over without waking.

The PERCUSSIONIST starts a rhythm.

HANSEL: *I'm in such a fix
A most horrible jam
Ohhh - don't let me think
Of how hungry I am.
My head is spinning
My brain's in my toe
She's counting on me
Oh woe! Oh no!*

He sits down on the floor. Gets more and more drowsy during the following.

HANSEL: *I'm in such a fix
A most horrible plight
I need a new plan
And I need it to...*

He falls asleep on the floor. Daylight comes. The PERCUSSIONIST makes an accompanying noise as MOTHER unlocks the door. She opens it enters, sees HANSEL asleep on the floor, smiles, and goes out. The rooster crows. HANSEL jerks awake.

HANSEL: Oh nooooo!

FATHER: *(Enters)* You're up early, Hansel.

HANSEL: *(Jumps)* Wha -?

FATHER: We need to get an early start. *(He shakes GRETEL)* Wake up, Gretel.

GRETEL: Ohhhhh.

HANSEL: Where are we going?

FATHER: Deep into the forest. To cut wood.

He exits out of the room and into the clearing. HANSEL and GRETEL follow. GRETEL tries desperately not to cry.

FATHER: Don't worry. Hansel will look after you.

GRETEL: I know.

MOTHER is waiting between HANSEL and the pile of pebbles. She gives them each a small dried out heel of bread.

MOTHER: This is your lunch. It's all there is so don't eat it till well into the day.

FATHER gets his axe, and the harness to hold the wood. GRETEL puts her bread into her pocket and then reaches out to take HANSEL's like she did before. He pulls it away. She tries to grab it. He holds it out of her reach. She jumps and pulls at him trying to get it.

GRETEL: I... you... give...

MOTHER: None of that!

FATHER: Follow me, son.

FATHER exits into the forest. HANSEL stands uncertain, then puts his bread in his pocket. Starts off. MOTHER takes GRETEL's hand and they follow. HANSEL circles around a tree and comes back into the clearing intending to pick up the pebbles. MOTHER sticks her head around a tree.

MOTHER: Hansel!

He changes direction and exits back into the forest. MOTHER picks up the pebbles and goes back into the forest. The little house disappears. FATHER appears from the other side of the stage.

FATHER: This direction feels lucky today.

He gestures to begin the second trek through the forest. MOTHER enters holding GRETEL's hand. She follows FATHER. GRETEL keeps

looking back towards HANSEL. MOTHER jerks her forward. HANSEL reaches into his pocket and bends down, as if placing crumbs along the path. This journey through the forest is wordless and choreographed and is accompanied by the PERCUSSIONIST. Each character has a gesture or action which they repeat in a rhythmic sequence as they move deeper into the forest.

FATHER exits and reappears in a clearing with the fire. The puppet stage appears. MOTHER and GRETEL join FATHER.

FATHER: Here's a nice place for you and Hansel to wait.

GRETEL: We can keep going.

FATHER: But your mother and I need to chop wood.

GRETEL: We can help.

MOTHER: You'd just get in the way.

HANSEL appears from around a tree. He bends down and places a crumb.

MOTHER: Now where's that boy?

HANSEL leaps up and into the clearing at her voice, his hands empty.

MOTHER: Wait here with your sister till we come back for you.

FATHER: I've made a good fire.

The two children stand, holding hands. FATHER takes a step towards them, but their accusing faces stop him.

FATHER: You'll be fine.

He exits, followed by MOTHER. HANSEL and GRETEL look at the forest, at each other. GRETEL sits down on one side of the fire, HANSEL on the other. An owl hoots.

GRETEL: *(Jumps)* What's that?

HANSEL: It's just an owl.

GRETEL: Oh.

They sit. There is the howl of a wolf.

GRETEL: What's that?

HANSEL: A - I don't know.

GRETEL: Yes, you do.

HANSEL: A wolf.

GRETEL jumps around the fire to be closer to HANSEL.

HANSEL: It's a long way away.

The growl of a bear is heard.

GRETEL: What's that?!

HANSEL: I don't know. I really don't know.

They stand back to back covering the angles. A puppet LARGE CROOKED RED RIMMED EYE flashes in the trees.

GRETEL: Ah!!

HANSEL: What?

GRETEL: There.

She points. They turn around still back to back. The EYE has gone.

HANSEL: Where?

They swing around. GRETEL points.

GRETEL: There.

But the EYE has disappeared from her view.

GRETEL: Oh.

The EYE reappears. Now HANSEL can see it on his side.

HANSEL: Ahhh!

The EYE disappears.

GRETEL: What?

HANSEL: Nothing. You're just imagining...

She swings round on him.

GRETEL: I am not. I saw - There!

The EYE dangles from between the trees.

HANSEL/GRETEL: Ahhh!

HANSEL goes to the fire.

GRETEL: Hansel!?

HANSEL begins to blow on the fire to build it up.

HANSEL: I'll chase it away. Make it - go.

GRETEL keeps glancing back to the EYE. It approaches, moves back, disappears.

GRETEL: It's gone.

HANSEL: Good.

GRETEL: So can we go home now?

HANSEL: Not yet.

GRETEL looks warily around.

GRETEL: *(In his ear)* Now?

HANSEL: Ahhhh! *(He jumps)* Don't do that!

GRETEL: Sorry. Can we?

HANSEL: What?

GRETEL: Go home.

HANSEL: No.

GRETEL: No?

HANSEL: Not yet. We have to wait for the moon to rise.

GRETEL: We'll freeze by then. I'm cold and I'm hungry and -

HANSEL: So eat your bread.

GRETEL: Oh. Okay.

HANSEL warms his hands at the fire, but it is going out. GRETEL takes her bread out of her pocket. Takes a bite. HANSEL looks at it wistfully.

GRETEL: Where's yours?

HANSEL: Not hungry.

The PERCUSSIONIST makes the sound of a big tummy rumble.

GRETEL: Hahahaha. Liar! Get your bread out.

HANSEL: No.

GRETEL: Get it out!

HANSEL: Can't

GRETEL: Why?

HANSEL: Haven't got any.

GRETEL: Have so.

HANSEL: Haven't.

GRETEL: I saw you... You wouldn't let me... you put it...

She dives for his pocket.

HANSEL: Get away.

GRETEL tickles HANSEL, making him giggle and flail his arms. She turns his pocket inside out.

GRETEL: It's gone.

HANSEL: I told you.

GRETEL: You ate it!

HANSEL: No.

GRETEL: You ate it already and you're hungry all over again.

HANSEL: No. I dropped crumbs along the path so we can find our way home.

GRETEL: Stones. You drop pebbles, Hansel. Not food.

HANSEL: I couldn't get any. She locked the door.

GRETEL: Oh.

She picks up her bread, looks at it, at him.

GRETEL: Do you want some of mine?

HANSEL: (Pause) No.

GRETEL: Okay.

She takes another bite. He turns away. She goes to take another bite. Stops.

GRETEL: Oh all right.

HANSEL: What?

GRETEL: Take it.

HANSEL: No. I...

GRETEL: My tummy's rumbled so much it's shrunk up like a cold pea. I'm full up.

HANSEL takes the bread. Gobbles it down.

GRETEL: Anyway, it's mouldy.

HANSEL gags.

GRETEL: Ha, ha. Got ya.

HANSEL: You -

He chases GRETEL around the fire. Moonlight begins to rise. It lights a crumb of bread by a tree at the edge of the clearing. GRETEL sees it and stops suddenly. HANSEL runs into her.

HANSEL: Owww! What'd you do that for?

GRETEL: Look. A crumb.

HANSEL goes to the crumb.

HANSEL: The path!

GRETEL: Oh.

HANSEL picks up the crumb, blows on it and eats it.

HANSEL: Let's go.

GRETEL: But - The eyes! What if they...

HANSEL: There's no more fire here to keep them away.

GRETEL: Ohhhh. Okay.

HANSEL exits. GRETEL takes a big breath and follows, looking around her in fear.

HANSEL GRETEL AND BIRD PUPPET SEQUENCE. Behind the puppet stage, a puppet SMALL WHITE BIRD enters, flies around, lands on a branch and chirps its little song.

SMALL WHITE BIRD: Do, do, dah, do-do-do. Cheep!

The SMALL WHITE BIRD sees a crumb of bread glowing in the moonlight.

SMALL WHITE BIRD: Cheep!

It flies to the crumb of bread, and gobbles it up. The light goes out.

SMALL WHITE BIRD: (With satisfaction) Cheep.

The SMALL WHITE BIRD looks. Sees another glowing crumb of bread.

SMALL WHITE BIRD: Do-do-do.

Hops along the ground towards the crumb. Bobs. Eats.

SMALL WHITE BIRD: Cheep.

Again the SMALL WHITE BIRD looks around.

SMALL WHITE BIRD: Do, do, dah.

From the other side of the puppet stage, PUPPET HANSEL enters.

PUPPET HANSEL: Here's the next crumb.

The SMALL WHITE BIRD flies off. PUPPET GRETEL enters but she is looking around fearfully.

PUPPET GRETEL: Ohhhhhhhh!

PUPPET HANSEL turns to her.

PUPPET HANSEL: What's the matter?

PUPPET GRETEL: I thought I saw - something. Red.

PUPPET HANSEL: We're looking for something white, Gretel. Like this.

He picks up the crumb. Eats it.

PUPPET GRETEL: Hey. You ate the last two.

PUPPET HANSEL: First one there gets the crumb.

He looks around. Another light appears.

PUPPET GRETEL: I see one.

She dashes to the crumb. Stuffs it in.

PUPPET GRETEL: Yum! So good. (Spits) Except for the dirt.

Another light glows.

PUPPET HANSEL: There.

He goes towards it.

PUPPET GRETEL: Oh no you don't.

She dives for it. He pushes her away. She sits down with a thunk.

PUPPET HANSEL: I saw it first.

He picks it up.

PUPPET GRETEL: Not fair.

She grabs for it. They struggle. She pushes him. He sits down with a thunk. Pointedly eats the crumb in front of her. Another light appears behind PUPPET HANSEL. The BIRD enters.

SMALL WHITE BIRD: Do-do-do. Cheep!

The SMALL WHITE BIRD gobbles up the crumb. PUPPET GRETEL sees the bird and points.

PUPPET GRETEL: Ahh!

The SMALL WHITE BIRD flutters around.

PUPPET HANSEL: Don't be such a scaredy pants, Gretel. It's just a bird.

PUPPET GRETEL: But -

PUPPET HANSEL: It's not even very big. Shooooo.

The SMALL WHITE BIRD flies into a tree.

PUPPET GRETEL: Your brain isn't very big.

PUPPET HANSEL: Huh?

PUPPET GRETEL: It's eating our path!

PUPPET HANSEL: What?

SMALL WHITE BIRD: Cheep.

Another light appears. The SMALL WHITE BIRD dives down and eats the crumb. The light goes out.

PUPPET HANSEL: No! You can't do thattttt! You -

He charges at the bird which cheeps and flees offstage. PUPPET

HANSEL follows.

PUPPET GRETEL: Wait uppppp!

PUPPET GRETEL exits. END OF HANSEL, GRETEL AND BIRD PUPPET SEQUENCE.

The puppet stage splits. The large portion disappears, leaving a smaller portion to one side.

A puppet LARGE WHITE BIRD (Larger version of the SMALL WHITE BIRD) appears followed by actor HANSEL, and then GRETEL. The LARGE WHITE BIRD leads them around the trees and deeper into the forest. The LARGE WHITE BIRD lands on the branch of a tree. HANSEL, out of breath, tries to sneak up on the LARGE WHITE BIRD. GRETEL, panting, clutching her side, catches up.

GRETEL: Hansel, you -

HANSEL: Shhh. It's on that branch.

GRETEL: What's it matter? We're lost and I'm hungry and -

HANSEL: So I'm going to catch it and we'll eat it.

GRETEL runs to the tree.

GRETEL: Shooo.

HANSEL: What'd you do that for?

GRETEL: It's so pretty.

HANSEL: I thought you were hungry.

GRETEL: I am. But -

She's confused. The LARGE WHITE BIRD trills again.

LARGE WHITE BIRD: To get out
Go further in

GRETEL: Listen.

LARGE WHITE BIRD: Further in
Further in

GRETEL: Further in?

LARGE WHITE BIRD: To get out
Go further in
So follow. Follow.

GRETEL: It's like a - sort of like a riddle.

HANSEL: Can't eat a riddle.

GRETEL: Maybe it's trying to help us-

HANSEL: Food would help us.

LARGE WHITE BIRD: Sometimes you must
Lose to win
Lose to win

GRETEL: What does it mean?

HANSEL: Lose to win? That's crazy.

LARGE WHITE BIRD: Lose to win
So follow. Follow.

HANSEL and GRETEL follow the LARGE WHITE BIRD as it flies around the stage.

LARGE WHITE BIRD: To change the end
You must begin
Must begin
Must begin

HANSEL/GRETEL: Must begin.

LARGE WHITE BIRD: To change the end
You must begin
So follow

HANSEL/GRETEL: Follow.

ALL: Follow.

HANSEL and GRETEL follow the flight of the LARGE WHITE BIRD. They stop, out of breath and weak from hunger. The LARGE BIRD flies off.

GRETEL: Can't run... any... Too far... Stupid bird.

In the distance, a sparkling puppet GINGERBREAD HOUSE appears. The puppet SMALL WHITE BIRD lands on the house.

HANSEL: Gretel. Look!

GRETEL: Too tired.

HANSEL: The red eye will get you.

GRETEL: Don't care.

HANSEL turns GRETEL around to look in the right direction.

GRETEL: A house. Here? It's not real. Is it?

HANSEL: I don't know.

GRETEL: To get out
Go further in.

She thinks for a moment, then starts moving in the direction of the house.

HANSEL: Where are you going?

GRETEL exits behind a tree and upstage.

HANSEL: Wait up. Gretel!!

He follows. The puppet GINGERBREAD HOUSE disappears and a larger scale version of the outside of the house, or maybe a corner of it, appears. There is a window, a bit of roof. A puppet SUN shines over the house. The house looks like it's made out of food. HANSEL and GRETEL enter and stand amazed.

HANSEL: Wow. It looks so -

GRETEL: Good.

HANSEL: Yeah. D'you see anybody?

GRETEL: Roof looks like gumdrops.

HANSEL: Silly. *(He takes a step forward)* Hello?

No answer. They move closer.

GRETEL: It smells like gumdrops.

The PERCUSSIONIST joins in with GRETEL.

GRETEL: *Need some food
Smells so sublime*

HANSEL/GRETEL: *Tummy Rumble*

GRETEL: *Dinnertime!*

GRETEL grabs a piece out of the house and pops it in her mouth.

GRETEL: It tastes like gumdrops!!

HANSEL dives in too and grabs a piece of the house.

GRETEL: *This is good*

HANSEL/GRETEL: *This is divine.*

GRETEL: *Scrumpsherumptious*

HANSEL: *Blissfully fine.*

They continue to eat.

GRETEL: *Gingerbread*

HANSEL: *And icing - sweet*

HANSEL/GRETEL: *Chocolate chips
What a treat!*

The WITCH, a woman with wildly coloured clothes and red rimmed eyes sticks her head out of the window.

WITCH: Nibble, nibble little mouse. Who's that nibbling at my house?

Both of the children have their mouths too full to scream. The WITCH grabs onto GRETEL and pulls her close up to her face.

WITCH: Jiminy Bumblebee, it's a child!

HANSEL breathes in sharply, and gets something caught in his throat. He starts to cough.

WITCH: What's that?

GRETEL: My bro- Nothing.

The WITCH lets go of GRETEL and disappears.

GRETEL: Hansel. Stop that. We've got to -

GRETEL pulls at HANSEL. The WITCH appears in the yard peering around struggling to see. HANSEL is still coughing.

GRETEL: Run -

WITCH: (To herself) Follow the noise.

GRETEL: Hansel!

The WITCH grabs onto HANSEL who's still coughing. The WITCH feels HANSEL, peers closely at his face.

WITCH: What have we here? A boy!

HANSEL coughs again.

WITCH: Oh dear. Oh goodness dear. About to spew.

HANSEL shakes his head and points at his throat. The WITCH understands and smacks him hard on the back.

GRETEL: Don't you dare - You mean -

HANSEL keeps coughing.

WITCH: Golly darn. Goodness my. He's turning blue!

She grabs HANSEL from behind, squeezing his chest.

GRETEL: Horrible -

The piece of the house caught in HANSEL's throat sails out of his mouth and he stops coughing.

WITCH: Phew!

HANSEL: Thank you, ma'am.

GRETEL: Thank you?

WITCH: That's a relief. Wouldn't want it to be said that a young lad choked to death on a bit of my house. Let me have a look at you now. (She looks and feels HANSEL all over) Handsome. Very handsome. But thin. Where's the other one? Come closer, dearie. Closer, I said. So I can see you.

GRETEL does, reluctantly. The WITCH pinches her cheek.

WITCH: What a sweet young thing you are. Handsome and sweet. And so deep in the forest. Jiminy Bumblebee, you're not afraid of me, are you? I loooovvvve children. I don't get nearly enough of them living here the way I do. Is anybody with you? (*HANSEL shakes his head*) Speak up, boy. Speak up!

HANSEL: No.

WITCH: Tsk, tsk, tsk. Welll, you're welcome to stay with me.

GRETEL: Really?

WITCH: One rule though. No more eating me out of house and home. It might rain. Look at this.

HANSEL: Sorry, but we were hungry.

WITCH: So come inside.

GRETEL backs away, unsure.

WITCH: I've got plenty of food.

The WITCH disappears as if going inside the house. HANSEL moves to follow her.

GRETEL: Maybe we shouldn't go in.

HANSEL: You were the one who wanted to come here.

GRETEL: Yes but -

HANSEL: She has food.

A long puppet WAFT OF AROMA appears enticing HANSEL and GRETEL to follow it. As the WAFT OF AROMA dances with GRETEL, the WITCH's house opens up. The children are drawn inside by the AROMA and up to a large pot on a huge stove. There's also a chest inside the house.

HANSEL/GRETEL: Mmmmmmmm.

The PERCUSSIONIST begins a rhythm.

WITCH: *Make yourself welcome
Tuck in and eat*

The WITCH hands HANSEL and GRETEL brightly coloured bowls and spoons. They dig in.

HANSEL: *We are so lucky*

GRETEL: *Look at this meat!*

WITCH: *Deep in the forest
All safe and so sound
Only the chirping*

Birds fly around

She watches them as they eat, maybe strokes HANSEL's hair.

HANSEL: *Someone to look after us*

GRETEL: *Someone who will make a fuss*

The WITCH snaps her fingers and a CLOTH magically appears. The WITCH takes it, spits on it and wipes HANSEL's face

HANSEL: *Wash my face*

WITCH moves to GRETEL, gestures with her finger and grabs a BRUSH seemingly out of the air. She begins to brush GRETEL's hair.

GRETEL: *And brush my hair*

HANSEL/GRETEL: *Treat us with
Such loving care*

HANSEL: *No more need to wail or weep*

GRETEL: *(Big yawn) I just want to go to sleep.*

The WITCH indicates the place where HANSEL and GRETEL are going to sleep.

WITCH: *Lullaby
And good night*

The children move off towards the bed.

Puppet PILLOWS and a FLUFFY BLANKET appear, like the CLOTH and BRUSH.

HANSEL: *No more hunger*

GRETEL: *No more fright*

WITCH: *Sun is going
Off to bed.*

The WITCH gestures. The puppet SUN disappears below the roof of the gingerbread house. With another gesture, the WITCH causes the puppet CRESCENT MOON to rise.

WITCH: *Moon is rising
In its stead.
In the forest
Safe and sound
Pleasant dreams
Will soon be found*

WITCH: *Lullaby*

GRETEL: *Safe and sound*

WITCH: *Lullaby*

HANSEL: *A home we've found*

WITCH: *Lullaby*

HANSEL/GRETEL: *Warm and fed*

WITCH: *Pleasant dreams*

HANSEL/GRETEL: *In my head.*

The children sleep. The WITCH smiles, gestures elaborately at the puppet MOON to make it set but nothing happens. She tries again. The MOON seems to shake its head. She shoos it away and then with effort pulls the puppet SUN up. She squats down and waits, watching the children. GRETEL wakes up. She looks around, confused. Shakes HANSEL.

HANSEL: Wha -?

GRETEL: Where are we?

HANSEL: In the forest.

GRETEL: This is NOT the forest, door knob. It's a bed.

The WITCH approaches.

WITCH: A bed in your new home in the forest. Remember?

GRETEL: Oh - yes. (Whispering to HANSEL.) D'you think there'll be breakfast?

WITCH: Of course there'll be breakfast. (GRETEL looks surprised) My eyes may be weak but my ears are VERY good. There'll be breakfast as soon as one of you helps me get some wood for the stove. Would you like to do that for me, sweet one?

HANSEL: I will.

WITCH: You?

GRETEL: She asked me.

HANSEL: But you're scared of the forest. I'm bigger than Gretel. And stronger.

WITCH: Are you?

HANSEL: I can carry a big load. Enough wood for the whole day.

WITCH: Good. You come with me then.

GRETEL: I can carry wood too.

WITCH: Maybe tomorrow. Today you can help by clearing away these things and setting out bowls for the porridge.

GRETEL: Porridge?

WITCH: With candy sprinkles on top.

GRETEL: Okay.

GRETEL puts away the bedding and gets the bowls as HANSEL and the WITCH move outside. The woodshed is slid onto the stage. HANSEL heads for the forest.

WITCH: No, no, no. This way boy. I keep the wood in my shed so it's safe and dry.

The WITCH holds the door of the shed open.

WITCH: In you go.

HANSEL disappears inside.

WITCH: A nice big armful now.

The WITCH takes a big key ring out of her pocket.

HANSEL: I don't see any wood.

The WITCH slams the door.

HANSEL: Hey!

The WITCH turns the key in the lock and pockets the key. The PERCUSSIONIST makes an accompanying noise of a key turning in the lock. HANSEL shakes at the door.

HANSEL: It's locked.

WITCH: Such a clever boy. *(She chuckles)*

HANSEL: Open the door!

WITCH: I don't think so.

HANSEL bangs on the door.

HANSEL: Let me out!!

GRETEL comes running out of the house.

GRETEL: Hansel? Hansel!! Where's my brother?

WITCH: Nice and safe.

HANSEL: Gretel!!!!!!

WITCH: In my shed.

GRETEL: You... You... You let him out of there!

WITCH: Can't do that, sweetie.

GRETEL: Yes you can.

WITCH: But won't, tender one.

GRETEL pulls at the door.

WITCH: Don't waste your energy, goosy, goosy, gosling. It's a good strong lock.

GRETEL: I thought... You said you liked children.

WITCH: I do. Tasty morsels. But better when there's a bit more meat on their bones, I always think.

GRETEL: What are you... You don't mean you're...

WITCH: Say it, dearie.

GRETEL: Oh, Hansel.

HANSEL: Don't listen to her.

WITCH: It's not that hard.

GRETEL: She's going to...

WITCH: To... to...

GRETEL: (*Barely able to get it out*) Eat you.

WITCH: There. That wasn't so bad.

HANSEL: Run, Gretel.

GRETEL: What?

HANSEL: Run away.

GRETEL: But -

WITCH: Gretel isn't going anywhere.

HANSEL: Yes she is.

WITCH: Gretel is scared of the forest, aren't you, my pretty one? There's eyes in the forest, aren't there, my little bit of honey.

HANSEL: Go!

WITCH: And the eyes belong to animals that will tear you apart.

GRETEL: Ohhhhhhhh.

WITCH: So Gretel is going to stay right here.

She grabs HANSEL's hand and feels his finger.

WITCH: And help to fatten you up.

GRETEL: Ohhhhhhhh.

The PERCUSSIONIST starts up a rhythm.

WITCH: *Don't weep and moan
 No one will hear
 I haven't seen
 A soul all year.*

WITCH: Apart from you two.

WITCH: *Now shake a leg*

*There's work to do
We'll feed the boy
A hearty stew.*

GRETEL: *Oh me
Oh my
Can this be real
My brother could be
Her next meal*

WITCH: *Go pull some carrots
No, wait a jot
Stew takes too long
There's a bird in the pot*

She moves to the kitchen area and lifts a chicken out of the pot.

WITCH: *This juicy chicken
Will do the trick
Will make that finger
Less like a stick.*

GRETEL: *Oh me
Oh my
Already hot
My brain won't work
I need a plot*

WITCH: *So fetch the tray
Don't be so slow
I can hardly wait
For the lad to grow.*

GRETEL gets a tray, the WITCH puts the chicken on it and GRETEL runs to the shed and passes it through the bars to HANSEL who eats.

GRETEL: *Oh me
Oh my*

HANSEL: *Have some as well*

GRETEL: *How can I eat
You're in a cell
Oh me
Oh my*

HANSEL: *You've got to run
She'll eat you too*

GRETEL: *This isn't fun
Oh me
Oh my*

HANSEL: *Why won't you go
Run fast, run far*

GRETEL: *I tell you - no.*

GRETEL: *I'm going to save you, Hansel.*

HANSEL: *Oh me
Oh my
With all those moans?
You silly girl
Just take the bones*

He pushes the tray of bones back at GRETEL.

WITCH: *Succulence and delectation
Tender morsel in the making
A gastronomical sensation
After slow and careful baking.*

GRETEL: *Oh me
Oh my
I've got a plan
Hold out a bone
When she asks for your hand.*

WITCH: *So now my lad
I want a feel -*

HANSEL holds out a chicken bone for her to feel.

WITCH: *Thinner it seems
After such a meal?
To the kitchen
Come - vite, vite!
We'll give the boy
A feast to eat.*

*The WITCH takes a big roast out of the oven and slaps it on the tray.
GRETEL takes it to HANSEL and they both eat as the WITCH incants.*

WITCH: *Succulence and delectation
Tender morsel in the making
I'm all aquiver with expectation
Of the nibbles I'll soon be taking.*

*The WITCH pushes GRETEL out of the way and again feels the bone
that HANSEL holds out.*

WITCH: *No fat at all
How can this be?
Oh curse these eyes
That cannot see*

HANSEL and GRETEL giggle and congratulate each other.

WITCH: *We'll have to try
Another tack
Maybe this*

The WITCH gestures and a puppet HUGE BOWL OF CHOCOLATE PUDDING AND WHIPPED CREAM appears.

WITCH: *Will make him fat.*

The WITCH hands the dessert to GRETEL who takes it to HANSEL sticking a finger in it herself on the way.

The WITCH becomes increasing frustrated.

WITCH: *Succulence and delectation
I am fed up with this waiting...*

She thrusts GRETEL out of the way.

WITCH: *Finger, boy!*

HANSEL doesn't have the bone. He dives for it, but the WITCH is too quick for him. She grabs his hair.

WITCH: *Finger, I said.*

HANSEL has found the bone and holds it out. GRETEL lets out a great sigh of relief. The WITCH feels in growing disbelief. She lets out a long howl.

WITCH: *You're supposed to be
All plump and ripe
What's going on
You guttersnipe!*

GRETEL: *Oh me
Oh my
Just feed him more
Or better still
Unlock the door.*

WITCH: *My patience now
Has worn quite thin
No more of this
We will begin.*

HANSEL: *Ohhhhhh!*

The WITCH drags GRETEL off to the oven. The rhythm continues under.

WITCH: *I want the oven very hot. I fancy fresh bread with my roasted boy.*

HANSEL/GRETEL: *Oh me. Oh my.*

WITCH: *And I've had quite enough of your blathering.*

HANSEL sinks down in despair.

WITCH: *Now where's my good tablecloth.*

She takes out her key ring, opens the chest and begins to scrabble



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