

“We must get out of this enchanted forest,” Hansel said.

They walked for two hours. Then they came to a part of the woods they remembered. They knew it better with every step they took. At last they saw their father's house.

They began to run. They rushed into the house and fell upon their father's neck. He had not had one happy hour since he had left the children in the forest. His wife was dead and he had been worried about his children.

Grethel shook her apron, and the pearls and precious stones rolled out upon the floor. Hansel threw down one handful of jewels after another from his pocket. Then all their sorrows were ended, and they lived together happily ever after.

HANSEL AND GRETHEL



An Old Fairy Tale



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15 - Minute Book

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Hansel and Grethel/An Old Fairy Tale

Summary: A brother and sister are left in the woods, where they find the hut of an old witch.

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“First, we will bake,” said the old woman. “I have already heated the oven and kneaded the dough” She pushed poor Grethel up to the oven. “Creep in,” said the witch, “and see if it is hot enough. Then we will put in the bread.”

She was going to shove Grethel in the oven and let her bake, so that she might eat her as well. Grethel knew this and said, “I do not know how to do it. How shall I get in?”

“You stupid goose,” said the witch. “The opening is big enough. See, I could even get in myself!” She got up, and put her head into the oven.

Then Grethel gave her a push, so that she fell right in. then she shut the iron door bolted it.

Oh how horribly the witch howled; but Grethel ran away, and left her to burn to ashes. She ran to Hansel, and opened the cage door. “Hansel we are saved,” she said. “The old witch is dead.”

They were so glad that they kissed each other over and over again. Since, there was nothing to fear, they went back to the witch's house. In every corner were baskets full of pearls and precious stones.

Hansel put as many in his pocket as it would hold. Grethel thought, “I will take some home too,” so she filled her apron full.

When four weeks had passed, and Hansel still kept quite lean, she lost her patience. She would not wait any longer.

“Grethel,” she cried, “get some water quickly. No matter how fat Hansel is, this morning I will kill and cook him.” Oh, how Grethel grieved, as she was forced to fetch the water.

“Dear God, help us now!” she prayed. “Had we only been eaten by the wild beasts in the wood, then we would have died together.”

But the old witch called out, “Stop that noise. It will not help you a bit.”



HANSEL AND GRETHEL

Once upon a time, there was a small house near a large wood. In it lived a poor wood cutter, with his wife, and two children by his former marriage. His little boy was called Hansel, and his little girl was named Grethel.

The family was so poor they had very little to eat. As he lay in his bed one night, he sighed. He said to his wife, “What will become of us? How can we feed our children, when we have no more than we can eat ourselves?”

“My husband,” she answered, “we will lead them away. Quite early in the morning we will lead them into the thickest part of the wood. There we will make them a fire, and give them each a little piece of bread. Then we will go to our work, and leave them alone. They will not find the way home again, and we shall be freed from them.”

“No!” he replied. “I can never do that. How can you think to leave my children all alone in the wood? The wild beasts will soon come and tear them to pieces?”

“Oh, you simpleton!” said she. “Then we will all four die of hunger. You had better make the coffins for us.”

The woman left him no peace. Every day she would talk of taking the children to the wood.

Finally he agreed, saying, “Ah, but I shall miss the poor children.”

The two children, however, had not gone to sleep, for they were very hungry. They overheard what their stepmother said to their father. Grethel wept bitterly, and said to Hansel, “What will become of us?”

her house so children would come to her. But as soon as they were in her power, she killed them, cooked and ate them.

Witches have red eyes, and cannot see very far, but they have a good sense of smell. They can smell when children are near.

Early in the morning, before they awoke, she went up to them, and saw how lovingly they lay sleeping. She mumbled to herself, “That will be a good bite.”

Then she took Hansel and shut him up in a little cage. He screamed loudly but it was of no use. Grethel came next. The witch shook her until she awoke. She said, “Get up, you lazy brat, and fetch some water to cook something good for your brother. He must stay in that cage and get fat. When he is fat enough I shall eat him.”

Grethel began to cry, but it was no use, for the old witch made her work. So a nice meal was cooked for Hansel, but Grethel got nothing but a crab's claw.

Every morning the old witch came to the cage and said, “Hansel, stretch out your finger so I can feel if you are getting fat.” But Hansel used to stretch out a bone. The old woman had very bad sight and thought it was his finger. She wondered and wondered why he did not get fat.

“We will go in here,” said Hansel, “and have a glorious feast. I will eat a piece of the roof, and you can eat the window.”

So Hansel reached up and broke a piece off the roof, to see how it tasted. Grethel stepped up to the window and began to bite it.

Then a sweet voice called out in the room, “Tip-tap, tip-tap, who knocks at my door?”

The children answered, “The wind, the wind, the child of heaven,” and they went on eating.

Hansel thought the roof tasted very nice, and so he tore off a big piece. Grethel broke a large round pane out of the window, and sat down to eat.

Just then the door opened, and a very old woman came out. She was walking on crutches.

Hansel and Grethel so frightened that they dropped their food. The old woman nodded her head, said, “Ah, you dear children, what has brought you here? Come in and stay with me, and no harm shall come to you.”

So she took them both by the hand, and led them into her cottage. A good meal of milk and pancakes, with sugar, apples and nuts, was spread on the table.

In the back room were two nice little beds, where Hansel and Grethel laid down, and were happy as could be. The old woman was very kind to them, but in reality she was a wicked old witch. She built

“Be quiet, Grethel,” he said. “Do not cry. I will help you.”

As soon as their parents had gone to sleep, he got up and put on his coat. Unbarring the back door, he went out.

The moon shone brightly. The white pebbles which lay by the door seemed like silver pieces, they glittered so brightly. Hansel put as many into his pocket as it would hold. Then he went back into the house.

He woke Grethel and showed them to her. “Be of good cheer, dear sister, and sleep in peace. God will not forsake us.” So saying, he went to bed again.

The next morning, before the sun arose, the wife went and awoke the two children. “Get up, you lazy things. We are going into the forest to chop wood.”

Then she gave them each a piece of bread, saying, “There is something for your dinner. Do not eat it before noon, for you will get nothing else.”

Grethel took the bread in her apron, for Hansel's pocket was full of pebbles. Then they all set out upon their way.

When they had gone a little way, Hansel turned and peeked back at the house. He did this several times.

Finally his father said, “Hansel, what are you looking at? Why do you lag behind?”

“Ah, father,” said Hansel, “I am looking at my white cat sitting upon the roof of the house, and trying to say good-bye.”

“You simpleton!” said the wife, “that is not a cat. It is only the sun shining on the white chimney.” But in reality Hansel was not looking at a cat. Every time he stopped, he dropped a pebble out of his pocket upon the path.

When they came to the middle of the forest, the father told the children to collect wood. He would make them a fire, so that they would not be cold.

So Hansel and Grethel gathered together a mound of twigs. Then they set fire to them.

As the flame burnt up high, the wife said, “Now, you children, lie down near the fire. Rest yourselves, while we go into the forest and chop more wood. When we are ready we will come and call you.”

Hansel and Grethel sat down by the fire. When it was noon, each ate the piece of bread. Because they could hear the blows of an ax they thought their father was near. But it was not an ax, but a branch which he had bound to an old tree. It was blown to and fro by the wind. Each time it struck the tree, it sounded like the blow of an ax.

They waited so long, that at last their eyes closed and they fell fast asleep. When they awoke, it was



by Jennie Harbour

saw a beautiful, snow-white bird sitting upon a tree branch. It sang so sweetly that they stood still and listened to it. It soon flew off; and they followed it until it came at a cottage.

When Hansel and Grethel came close up to the house, they saw that it was made of bread and cakes. The window panes were made of clear sugar.

When noon came, Grethel shared her bread with Hansel, who had dropped his on the path. They then went to sleep.

When night came, no one came to visit the poor children. In the dark night, they awoke. Hansel comforted his sister by saying, “Only wait, Grethel, till the moon comes out. Then we shall see the crumbs of bread that I have dropped. They will show us the way home.”

The moon shone and they got up, but they could not see any crumbs. Birds had been flying about in the woods and fields. They had picked up all the crumbs.

Hansel kept saying to Grethel, “We will soon find the way;” but they did not. They walked the whole night long and the next day. Still they did not come out of the wood.

They got very hungry, for they had nothing to eat but the berries they found on the bushes. Soon they were so tired that they could not drag themselves along. Then they lay down under a tree and went to sleep.

It was now the third morning since they had left their father's house. Still they walked on, but they only got deeper and deeper into the wood.

Hansel felt that if help did not come soon they must die of hunger. As soon as it was noon, they



“HANSEL AND GRETHEL SAT DOWN BY THE FIRE.”

quite dark. Grethel began to cry. “How shall we get out of the wood?”

But Hansel tried to comfort her by saying, “Wait a little while till the moon rises. Then we will quickly find the way.”

The moon shone forth, and Hansel took his sister's hand. They followed the pebbles, which glittered like new silver pieces, and showed them the way. All night long they walked on.

As day broke they came to their father's house and knocked at the door. When the wife opened it, and saw Hansel and Grethel, she cried, “You wicked children! Why did you sleep so long in the wood? We thought you were never coming home again.” But their father was very glad, for it had torn at his heart to leave them all alone.

Soon afterwards, there was again a bad time in every corner of the land. One night the children overheard their mother saying to their father, “Everything is gone. We have only half a loaf of bread left. The children must be sent away. We will take them deeper into the wood, so that they cannot find the way out again. It is the only means of escape for us.”

But her husband felt very sad. He thought, “It would be better to share the last crust with the children.” But his wife would not listen to what he

said, and scolded him without end.

The children, however, had heard them talk as they lay awake. As soon as their parents went to sleep, Hansel got up. He planned to pick up some pebbles as before. But the wife had locked the door, so that he could not get out. Still he comforted Grethel, saying, “Do not cry. Sleep in quiet. God will not forsake us.”

Early in the morning, the stepmother came and pulled them out of bed. She gave them each a slice of bread. On the way through the woods, Hansel broke his in his pocket. He stopped every now and then, and dropped a crumb upon the path.

“Hansel, why do you stop and look about?” said his father. “Keep up.”

“I am looking at my little dove,” answered Hansel. “She is nodding good-bye to me.”

“Idiot!” said the wife. “That is no dove, but only the sun shining on the chimney.” But Hansel kept dropping crumbs as he went along.

The mother led the children deep into the wood, where they had never been before. She made a huge fire, and said to them, “Sit down here and rest. When you feel tired, you can sleep for a little while. We are going into the forest to cut wood. In the evening, when we are ready, we will come and get you.”