

Plays for Young Audiences

A PARTNERSHIP OF SEATTLE CHILDREN'S THEATRE AND CHILDREN'S THEATRE COMPANY-MINNEAPOLIS

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Hansel & Gretel

Story by
The Grimm Brothers

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Music Composed by
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Hansel & Gretel was first presented by The Children's Theatre Company for the 2004-2005 season. All Rights Reserved.

ACT ONE

DARK STAGE. GRETEL, WITH A LIGHTED LAMP, COMES ON STAGE.
SHE IS IN HER NIGHTGOWN.
THE SOUND OF SOMEBODY PAINFULLY PRACTICING
THE VIOLIN IN THE DISTANCE. GRETEL LIFTS THE LAMP.

THE SOUND OF TRUMPETS AND DRUMS.

A QUEEN ENTERS, DRESSED IN MAGNIFICENT CLOTHES.

QUEEN

Gretel! Dearest! Come! I am a Queen, and fairy! Come! I have a special gift for you!

GRETEL

For me?

QUEEN

To celebrate your birthday, I am offering you any gift you like. Any!

GRETEL OBSERVES THE AMAZING TOYS.

THE QUEEN ESCORTS GRETEL TO INSPECT THE TOYS.

QUEEN

What do you want? Say!

GRETEL

What do I want?

QUEEN

Say! Say! Say!

GRETEL PUSHES THE QUEEN AWAY.

GRETEL

Bread! I want bread! Bread! Bread! BREAD!

AT THE WORD 'BREAD' THE QUEEN SCRAMBLES AWAY IN TERROR.
GRETEL IS ALONE, IT WAS ALL A DREAM.
SHE IS IN HER DILAPIDATED HOME,
HER MOTHER IS PLAYING THE VIOLIN. THE MOTHER STOPS ABRUPTLY
WHEN GRETEL SCREAMS 'BREAD'.

MOTHER

Don't say that word! Ever!

HANSEL COMES IN.

HANSEL

I'm hungry.

MOTHER

Home? Already? I said go out.

HANSEL

I'm hungry.

MOTHER

Go and see if it's raining.

HANSEL

It is not.

MOTHER

Go and see if the sun is setting.

HANSEL

It is. I'm hungry.

MOTHER

It's too early for dinner.

HANSEL

Lunch?

MOTHER

It's too late for lunch.

HANSEL

When will be the time for breakfast?

MOTHER

Tomorrow.

HANSEL

You said that yesterday.

MOTHER

Well... too late... yesterday is gone.

HANSEL

I'm hungry...hungry...hungry...

GRETEL

I have an idea! Take a pinch of dust...

(HANSEL does)

... a spider web with the spider in it...

(HANSEL does)

... rub it into your eyes and you'll forget hunger instantly.

(HANSEL screams)

MOTHER

Go out and play.

HANSEL

No one plays anymore.

MOTHER

No?

HANSEL

They just scavenge for scraps.

GRETEL

Sillies! There's nothing left.

HANSEL

The neighbors have eaten their shoes. I want to eat my shoes!

MOTHER

We already ate them.

HANSEL

Is the King eating his shoes?

GRETEL

Dah! They're made of gold and pearls!

HANSEL

If I were the King, I'd have my shoes made out of sausages and sauerkraut.

MOTHER

Uhm...

HANSEL

I'll give you shoelaces of string beans, mother!

GRETEL

Hansel, a King?

HANSEL

Sure!

GRETEL

Methink you are the King of stink!

HANSEL

Oh, ouch!

GRETEL

...What?

HANSEL

My... my stomach wants to be fed... ouch... anything at all...

GRETEL

What? What, King of Everything?

SONG: THE STOMACH IS KING

GRETEL

Oh the King proclaims...“I will have bread! I will be fed!”
So says the King.
He is the tyrant living deep inside your gut.
When he says,

HANSEL/GRETEL

‘I want food!’

GRETEL

My friend you have to strut.
You will obey his orders
You will bow down before the cruel master
Of all things that eat.
For he will show no mercy
He will not bend his law with cries for pity!
Hail to the Stomach!

ALL

Hail to the Stomach, our King!

MOTHER

Who knows... things might... get better...

GRETEL

...and maybe stay that way forever...

HANSEL

I’m hungry now! I demand... bread with butter, roasted pig, sausages!

GRETEL

King Stomach speaks!

GRETEL AND MOTHER

Hail to the Stomach! Hail to the Stomach, our King

MOTHER

Oh Mighty King! It must be said we have no bread.

MOTHER AND GRETEL

Take pity my King.

HANSEL

Pity? Off with their heads.

MOTHER AND GRETEL

When you are sleeping like a baby in your bed
He will awaken you with screams for sausages!

HANSEL

Bring me a bowl of oatmeal!

MOTHER AND GRETEL

Make him a crown of beets and leeks and carrots. Do not disobey!
For now the war is waging
And I'm afraid we lost before we started.

ALL

Hail to the stomach! Hail to the stomach, our King!

MOTHER

Who knows, my buttercup. I've heard of children who went to the woods and came back
with great riches.

THE FATHER COMES IN WITH A LITTLE WOOD TO BURN, JOINS IN.

FATHER

Hey! Good news!

HANSEL

Father! What news?

MOTHER

A rabbit? To roast?

FATHER

Ah. Ah well.

GRETEL

A squirrel? For stew?

FATHER

Oh well.

HANSEL

A sparrow? This small? Smaller?

FATHER

Ah, no:... wood. ... Well, so it is. Wood! Isn't it good news! ... A bit too green... well, I
guess so, but...

MOTHER

We can get warm...

GRETEL

... and if we close our eyes, imagine we smell ...

HANSEL
...hot milk!

GRETEL
Sausages!

FATHER
Sausages are heavy at night! No sausages after six!

HANSEL
We'll smell soup, father. We promise!

GRETEL
Let's light the fire!

FATHER
Exactly. What?! No, no...we must try to sell the wood.

MOTHER
Why? Why? What can we barter for those five twigs? A song? Who has anything left? I feel cold, so cold. Warm me with a little bit of fire! Warm me for a moment!

FATHER
Yes, ah... dearest...uhm... Oh dear. Oh dear. With my heart and soul I'd like to warm you! Courage, my beloved.

MOTHER
Oh yes.

THE FATHER IS TOUCHED, ASSUMES A MANLY POSE.

FATHER
Yes! Ah now... now ...uhmn...courage, you little chickadees!
(SUNG)
Courage I'd say. No tears. No whimpering!
Courage I say. Oh Piccolini.
No tears! No Whimpering. We'll fight! There.

ALL
How?

FATHER
How...? Hmn...

THE FATHER GETS AN IDEA.

FATHER

There! Perfect! Let's run in circles. You run, you feel warm! One-two! One-two! Ah-ah! Energizing, see? One-two! One-two! Gretel? Will you pick up the pace, young lady.

THE FATHER LEADS THE CHILDREN IN A CIRCLE TO WARM UP.

GRETEL

I'm... tired...

FATHER

Excellent! Tired is good: you won't feel hunger!

HANSEL

I'm dizzy.

FATHER

Run! Imagine a witch is running after you! Uh! Dear God, the witch! Run! Run! Run!

THE MOTHER IS TOO WEAK.

MOTHER

I can't run... I'm short of breath...

HANSEL

Run mother, run...

GRETEL

Pretend...

HANSEL

The Witch is here...

THE CHILDREN RUN, THEN FALL DOWN.

FATHER

Children? What is this nonsense? Napping! At this hour! I shall not allow such slovenly...

THE FATHER FALLS DOWN.

FATHER

Well, actually... marvelous idea... if we sleep, no hunger.

GRETEL

I'm tired

HANSEL

And hungry! Hungry, Hungry....

MOTHER

Sh-sh-sh... that... word...that...word.

FATHER

Children, children ... hush....mother is tired...

HANSEL

But I am...! (catches himself) That word.

FATHER

Hmn... Ah, well...Go to the well and get water. It'll fill our stomachs. There. Excellent idea.

MOTHER

Water and words, and that's it! Hear my stomach howling?

THE MOTHER MOANS.

GRETEL

You don't feel well, mother?

FATHER

Go, Gretel! Go, get water.

MOTHER

Now? Isn't it too dark? They're little...

FATHER

Not too dark yet. Excellent light. They'll be fine.

MOTHER

Gretel, my child... your fingers are so cold...

GRETEL

A little. Don't worry.

FATHER

Don't worry. Don't worry.

MOTHER

Let me give you my shawl.

THE MOTHER GIVES GRETEL HER SHAWL.

FATHER

Children... Ah... I know there'll be a change... a change for the better, soon. Yes! Oh yes! Of course there will. We'll have soup... with a sprinkle of salt and a couple of chicken bones maybe... and millet to roast. So kindly go get water, dear things! And when you return...when you return, we will light this little fire, we will, and drink warm water, together.

THE CHILDREN LEAVE.AS MOTHER AND FATHER WATCH THEM GO.

HANSEL AND GRETEL AT THE WELL. GRETEL GETS WATER FROM THE WELL AS HANSEL SEES GENTLEMEN APPROACHING.

HANSEL

I see two noblemen...the color of sausage and omelets...

GRETEL

What?

THE TWO NOBLE GENTLEMEN ENTER, ARGUING.

GENTLEMAN 1

...But, dear Count, we are hopelessly lost. To the right! To the left! Right! Left! Right again! And why?

GENTLEMAN 2

I have to follow my impulses. I was following the clouds, and my heart!

GENTLEMAN 1

Then your heart should pay the bill for a new pair of boots and a room at the inn. I need to rest my feet! This instant!

GENTLEMAN 2

Oh dear, yes! I need a chair, a pillow, a table. I need to eat. What agony!

GENTLEMAN 1 TAKES AN APPLE FROM HIS POUCH, STARTS TO TAKE A BITE, THEN STOPS.

GENTLEMAN 1

Me, eat standing? Like a donkey! A mule! An ass!

GENTLEMAN 1 TOSSES APPLE AWAY. THE GENTLEMEN NOTICE THE CHILDREN, WHO ARE SCRAMBLING FOR THE TOSSED APPLE.

GENTLEMAN 1

Look, people! Well, children.

GENTLEMAN 2

Uh, filthy!

GENTLEMAN 1

They call them...

GENTLEMAN 2

Don't say it...I can't stomach that word.

SONG: A SPOT ON THE TABLECLOTH

GENTLEMAN 1

Beggars!

GENTLEMAN 2

Enough! I'll excise the word beggar from the dictionary with my sword!

GENTLEMAN 1

What shall we call them my kindest, sir?
For though they've no name, they still are here!

GENTLEMAN 1

It's a puzzle.

GENTLEMAN 2

No,no,no,no, a conundrum!

GENTLEMAN 1

What shall we call these deplorable things but a...

GENTLEMAN 2

... but a spot on the tablecloth, but, a spot on the tablecloth!

GENTLEMAN 1

No, no, no, no, they are the rust on a silver spoon.

GENTLEMAN 2

They are the singer that sings out of tune

BOTH

The singer that sings out of tune!

GENTLEMAN 1

Oooo

GENTLEMAN 2

Ugh!

Though they are young,

GENTLEMAN 1

Though they are weak,

GENTLEMAN 2

Babes in the woods!

BOTH

Or so they seem,

BOTH

They are the blight that spoils the view.
They are the dung on the sole of the shoe.
The dung on the sole of the shoe.

GENTLEMAN 1

Disgusting.

GENTLEMAN 2

And smelly

GENTLEMAN 1

Right-O, old man!

GENTLEMAN 1

What can be done?

GENTLEMAN 2

What can be said?

BOTH

They are the mold that spoils the bread!
They are the mold that spoils the bread!

GENTLEMAN 2

Hugh!

GENTLEMAN 1

Pugh!

GENTLEMAN 2

Put them to work!

GENTLEMAN 1

Let them eat cake!

BOTH

Who are we to question fate?
Who are we to question fate?

GENTLEMAN 2

They get in our way

GENTLEMAN 1

They play on our fears

GENTLEMAN 2

They beg and they plead

BOTH

Such crocodile tears!
Though we scratch and scrape our boots
They stick like dung on the sole of the shoe!
Like dung on the sole of the shoe.

GENTLEMAN 1

However, since you've got us so dreadfully lost... perhaps we can ask them about an inn, where we can drink, have music. Or at the very least sit like gentlemen.

GENTLEMAN 1

Children... We are traveling noblemen who lost their way...Do you know where an inn is?

HANSEL

No.

GRETEL PUSHES HANSEL ASIDE.

Ah! It's happening! I did it! Light a fire! Mother? Bring out the violin. Two noblemen with money...no... foodyes... money and food... are coming here! For music! I can't wait I can't wait!

FATHER

Uh. Money? Food! Yes?

GRETEL

Yes yes yes! Get out the violin! Burn the wood!

MOTHER

The wood!

GRETEL

They're here with food!

FATHER

Food! There! As I said! As I said dear....Uh... things are... well... changing... well... turning... ..hmn....Oh dear! Oh dear!

HANSEL RUNS IN.

HANSEL

The Nobelman are here!

GRETEL

Let's make the house... beautiful! Like a...like a...

FATHER

Yes !

ALL

Exactly!

THE FAMILY PREPARES THE HOUSE.

THE GENTLEMEN ENTER. THEY ARE AGHAST AT THE SIGHT OF THE HOME.

GENTLEMAN 1

Don't touch anything, dear friend.

GRETEL

Welcome to our little palace! Warm and toasty. Oh... yes...smell the air... the wood is burning... so welcoming! Enjoy the smell, the warmth! And now... music! Music! Let the feast begin!

THE FATHER BOWS. THE GENTLEMEN WALK TO THE TABLE. THEY DUST THEIR CHAIRS WITH THEIR EMBROIDERED HANDKERCHIEFS, SIT AND CAREFULLY REMOVE THEIR HATS.

FATHER

My wife will play for you.

(to the MOTHER, who is not moving)
My dearest, the violin.

THE MOTHER GOES TO GET THE VIOLIN.

FATHER

Please.

THE GENTLEMEN TAKE FOOD OUT OF THEIR BAGS.

THE FAMILY IS SPELLBOUND. THE GENTLEMEN NOTICE THE STARES.

GENTLEMAN1

These children's looks are spoiling my appetite.

FATHER

Let's...uhm...children please.

GENTLEMAN 1

We'd like to dine while enjoying the music. What's food, without music?

GENTLEMAN2

What's music without food?

THE MOTHER WALKS IN WITH THE VIOLIN. THE FATHER IS TOUCHED.

FATHER

Here she is! Look! Ah, so... so... miraculous. Just the touch of her violin brings color to her cheeks...

GENTLEMEN

A violin? That's all?

FATHER

She played at the King's table one day!

THE GENTLEMEN START EATING.

GRETEL

And he smiled! The King himself... stopped eating ...and...uh...

THE CHILDREN ARE WATERING AT THE MOUTH AT THE VISION OF FOOD.
MOTHER BEGINS PLAYING THE VIOLIN. THE FATHER JOINS THE
CHILDREN.

FATHER

Children! Children! ...Uhm... don't ...uh... stare. It's not polite when people are...ah...eating.

FATHER TAKES THE CHILDREN AWAY FROM THE TABLE AS THE
GENTLEMEN CONTINUE EATING.

FATHER

Occupy your little minds. Instantly!

HANSEL and GRETEL
Yes, yes! How?

FATHER
With...with...math!

TO DISTRACT THE CHILDREN, THE FATHER QUIZZES THEM.

FATHER
2x2! 2x3! Etc.

THE CHILDREN STAMMER THEIR ANSWERS.

HANSEL
Hmn...I have to pee...badly... real badly...

HANSEL JUMPS UP AND DOWN.

FATHER
Run outside quick, my lamb.

HANSEL
It's freezing outside.

HANSEL ABSCONDS WITH ONE OF THE GENTLEMEN'S HATS.
THE MUSIC IS FINISHED. THE MOTHER BOWS, TREMBLING AS FATHER
AND GRETEL APPLAUD MOTHER. THE GENTLEMEN HAVE BARELY PAID
ATTENTION, BUSY PACKING UP THEIR LEFTOVERS.
THE FATHER APPROACHES AND BOWS, EAGER TO BE PAID.

GENTLEMEN
Yes?

FATHER
Gentlemen, I was wondering... if you would be gracious enough to offer us a
little...payment.

GENTLEMAN 1
Payment, did you say?

GENTLEMAN 2
Uh, payment.

GENTLEMAN 1
Uh. Well...the orchestra was...

GENTLEMAN 2
There was no orchestra...

GENTLEMAN 1
Right, right. There was no orchestra! Therefore...

GENTLEMAN 2
We can't pay for it.

FATHER
The violin...

GENTLEMAN 1
A bit...

GENTLEMAN 2
...too scratchy.

FATHER
Too scratchy?

GENTLEMAN 1
Too noisy! Too sad! Too much! But I won't be offended. I forgive.

GENTLEMAN 2
We forgive. Just this one time we won't take it as a personal affront. If we were to...

GENTLEMAN 1
Uh-Oh.

GENTLEMAN 2
You'd be whipped.

THE GENTLEMEN START TO LEAVE, WITH GREAT POMP.

GRETEL
What? That's it?!

FATHER
Give us a chicken bone! A slice of bread! We will take any scrap as payment.

GRETEL
Please do something!

GENTLEMAN 1
That's enough!

GENTLEMAN 2
Pipe down!

FATHER
Gentlemen, have a heart.

MOTHER
What did they say? My Lords... I beg you...

As greedy as roaches. GENTLEMAN 1

Let's leave. GENTLEMAN2

Have mercy... GRETEL

How sickening. GENTLEMEN 1

Get out. Get out get out. MOTHER

GENTLEMAN 1 PICKS UP HIS HAT TO LEAVE IN A MAJESTIC HUFF, AND PUTS IT ON HIS HEAD. HE IS DRENCHED, AS THIS WAS THE HAT HANSEL HAD USED AS A CHAMBER POT.

What!? GENTLEMAN1
(sees how HANSEL is laughing)
Rascal...

I'm going to give you a good whipping boy GENTLEMAN2

a good whipping. GENTLEMAN 1

HANSEL RUNS AWAY. THE GENTLEMEN RUN AFTER HIM.

THE FATHER, THE MOTHER AND GRETEL CRAWL ON THE FLOOR EATING RAVENOUSLY THE FEW CRUMBS LEFT. HANSEL REAPPEARS.

Did you leave me any? HANSEL

GRETEL OFFERS HANSEL ONE TINY CRUMB SHE SAVED FOR HIM.

One crumb. GRETEL

Don't worry, I never liked leftovers much. HANSEL

HANSEL PUTS THE CRUMB IN HIS MOUTH WITH GREAT CARE, CHEWS AS IF IT WAS A DELIGHTFUL MORSEL.

MOTHER

Sh-sh-sh... my mind is making so much noise. I can't watch myself die. Sh-sh-sh. How long can we last?

FATHER

Two weeks... or... Well, we might...

MOTHER

The children are lucky. They have strong arms and legs.... Winter doesn't scare them.

FATHER

Lucky them....

MOTHER

I have heard of children who went to the woods and came back with riches.

FATHER

You heard that?

THE FATHER NOTICES THAT HANSEL AND GRETEL ARE STILL IN THE ROOM.

FATHER

Go to bed, children...

THE CHILDREN GO TO BED.

NIGHT.

THE CHILDREN ARE SITTING IN BED.

HANSEL

Gretel, your hair is messy.

GRETEL

Strong wind.

HANSEL

Let me comb it for you.

GRETEL

Comb it! With what?

HANSEL

My fingers.

HANSEL DOES, GENTLY.

SONG: BIRTH SIGNS.

HANSEL

You were born at sunrise
And you know what they say
Children born at the break of day
Are quick-witted and bright
A-lu-lu-le-lo
A-lu-le-lo
A-lu-lu-le-lo
Le-le-le-jo-le-jo
A-lu-lu-le-lo
A-lu-lu-le-lo

HANSEL AND GRETEL

That's what they tell us
Quick witted and bright

GRETEL

You were born on Sunday
And you know what they say
Children born on that holy day
Are bright, bonny and gay
A-lu-lu-le-lo
A-lu-le-lo
A-lu-lu-le-lo
Le-le-le-jo-le-jo
A-lu-lu-le-lo
A-lu-lu-le-lo

HANSEL AND GRETEL

That's what they tell us
Bright, bonny and gay

Both of us were born with dimples
Dimples are a lucky sign
And the moment of our birth
Our father rushed us up
To the top of the stairs
Just to insure
In this world we will rise.

We were born for something
Something better than this
And we vow to each other now,
To find it wherever it is.

SCENE SHIFTS. MORNING.
THE MOTHER IS STIRRING SOMETHING IN THE BOILING CAULDRON.

THE FATHER ENTERS WITH AN EMPTY BAG.
HE IS UNSTEADY ON HIS FEET.

FATHER

... Hmn... hello....It's dreadful out there, even the rats are dying of hunger...

MOTHER

Not soft enough yet... the belt from my wedding dress...

HANSEL

I want eggs! Milk! Bread!

FATHER

Stop that!

MOTHER

That's it! They're driving me crazy. That's it. Stop yelling! Get out of my sight!

GRETEL TAKES HANSEL ASIDE.

GRETEL

Stop crying for food, be very quiet.

HANSEL

I want an egg.

HANSEL STARTS WHIMPERING.

MOTHER

Hansel is crying again.

GRETEL

No...no...I just stepped on his foot by mistake...

MOTHER

This home cannot give you enough shelter.

FATHER

We have nothing to give you.

GRETEL

No, no, we are warm here.

MOTHER

You are growing hungrier every day.

GRETEL SIGNALS TO HANSEL.

GRETEL

No, no, we can't feel hunger anymore.

HANSEL

Not a bit!

MOTHER

They'd cut me with their eyes.

SONG: HUNGER'S MADNESS

MOTHER

When you were a baby in my arms, just a little seed cake,
I would lick the frosting from your lips, nibble at your small legs.
Your toes were butter, your fingers sugar,
But now I put you to my mouth and all I want to do is spit you out.
Where is the sweetness
The toes of sugar
The dogs are barking, the dogs are barking at the door.

HANSEL BACKS AWAY.

HANSEL

W-what... are you... what is she saying...?

FATHER

Go, go out and play! Run, chickadees! Run!

THE CHILDREN RUN OUT.
THE MOTHER TURNS TO THE FATHER

MOTHER

When I was a lass, I'd turn your head with smiles of spit vinegar.
Now, I've just a mouth of broken teeth, cracking lips and thinning hair.
But to her memory, that girl of promise
Who gave you everything you asked and even more without a question, why.
So now it's my turn my turn for asking.
My turn for asking, for begging, for pleading,
O Please.
Take them away. Take them away.

THE FATHER MOVES AWAY AND MOTHER FOLLOWS HIM.

THE CHILDREN TIPTOE BACK TO THE DOOR, FRIGHTENED.

GRETEL

Shhhhhh!

HANSEL

What is it? What are they talking about?

GRETEL
Shh! I can't hear them if you talk!

HANSEL
I'm scared!

GRETEL
Shh! I can't hear them!

HANSEL
Shh! What are they saying?

HANSEL AND GRETEL
Shhhhhhhhhh!

THEY TIPTOE CLOSER TO THE DOOR TO HEAR BETTER.

HANSEL
W-what did they s-say?

GRETEL
S-something like...'Take them'!

HANSEL
Take them where!?

GRETEL
S-something like...'Leave them'!

HANSEL
And where...?

GRETEL
I t-think....t-the forest...

HANSEL AND GRETEL
The forest!

GRETEL
Hansel! My silly fruitfly! Hold my hand! I won't call you a silly fruitfly anymore!

HANSEL
Gretel! Lying insect of my life! Tell me a lie! Tell me everything is fine!

THEY HUG.

GRETEL
I love you as much as a flea loves a dog.

HANSEL
I love you as much as a dog loves a tree.

THE FATHER APPROACHES THE CHILDREN

FATHER
Come here, Hansel, I have something to tell you.

HANSEL
Me? Sure?

FATHER
Come with me, son.

HANSEL
Where?

FATHER
To find wood...

HANSEL
I'll cut wood like a grown man! And better!

THE FATHER HUGS HANSEL.

FATHER
Come with me, son. Gretel, come.

GRETEL
Where are we going?

FATHER
Quiet! We are heading where there is wood.

MOTHER APPROACHES AND OFFERS HANSEL SOME BREAD.

MOTHER
Our last piece of bread.

HANSEL LOOKS AT HIS MOTHER, SCARED.

HANSEL
Our last piece ...

MOTHER
Take it.

HANSEL TAKES THE BREAD.

FATHER
Yes, lets' go! Let's go.

MOTHER
Is anything keeping you?

HANSEL
Nothing is keeping me.

MOTHER
Go with your father, then.

HANSEL
Yes.

MOTHER
Save the bread for later, when hunger will be stronger.

FATHER
We must go now, come on.

FATHER, HANSEL AND GRETEL EXIT.

THE WOODS.

GRETEL
Hansel... crumble the bread... it'll last more.

HANSEL
Good idea...

GRETEL
Pretty good, but... what will we do when...uh...when...

HANSEL
Wait...what if...I crumble the bread and use the crumbs as pebbles....

GRETEL
Yes, yes! To show us the way home!

SONG: ONE CRUMB OF BREAD.

HANSEL
One crumb of bread left for memory

GRETEL
One crumb of bread left to find the happy times
Once again.

HANSEL
One crumb of bread for our mother

GRETEL
One crumb of bread just to hear the happy song
She used to sing

BOTH

La, la, lullaby-o
la, la, lullaby-o
One crumb of bread just to find our way home.

GRETEL

One crumb of bread for a party

BOTH

For feasting and singing and clapping
When we step through the door

HANSEL

One crumb of bread for surprises

BOTH

For going ahead doing
Things you never thought you could do
La, la, lullaby - o
La, la, lullaby - o
la, la, lullaby - o
One crumb of bread left to find our way home.

HANSEL SECRETLY SPREADS CRUMBS OF BREAD. THEY FORM A PATH ON THE GROUND, BUT AS SOON AS THE FATHER AND CHILDREN WALK AHEAD HUNDREDS OF BIRDS SWOOP DOWN AND EAT THEM.

THE CHILDREN CATCH UP TO FATHER.

SCENE SHIFTS.

A CLEARING IN THE WOODS.

THE TREES ARE SO THICKLY CROWDED THAT THE MOONLIGHT CAN SCARCELY PENETRATE THEM. WE HEAR THE SOUNDS OF THE WILDERNESS AT NIGHT.

ENTER HANSEL, GRETEL AND THE FATHER.

HANSEL

I'm tired, I'm so tired.

FATHER

Sit down then, rest.

HANSEL

Thank you, father.

FATHER

Let's rest, I can't breathe. I can hardly breathe.

Where are we? GRETEL

Here. FATHER

FATHER LIGHTS A SMALL FIRE.

It's spooky here. HANSEL

Sleep a little, rest. Sleep tesoro del babbo, piccolini sleep.

THE CHILDREN FALL ASLEEP WHILE THE FATHER PREPARES TO LEAVE.

FATHER
I am leaving my children to the forest, me, not an ogre, not a Cyclops with one eye. Me. Courage my little chickadees courage.

THE FATHER GOES AWAY.

A STRANGE LIGHT, A STRANGE MUSIC, A SMOKY SKY.

GRETEL STANDS, DREAMING.

I'm hungry, I'm hungry, I'm hungry GRETEL

FIREFLIES HOVER, BUT DISAPPEAR AS GRETEL REACHES FOR THEM.

A CAKE APPEARS WHERE HANSEL WAS.

GRETEL LUNGES AFTER THE CAKE AND TAKES A BITE.

THE CAKE TURNS BACK INTO HANSEL.

Ouch! HANSEL

GRETEL WAKES UP.

What? GRETEL

What are you doing!?!? HANSEL

Just... just... just a dream... GRETEL

HANSEL

Father! Gretel bit me! ... Father?!

GRETEL

Good morning father. Father? Please don't hide.

HANSEL

Don't hide! I don't want to play. Father?

GRETEL

He's gone.

HANSEL

You absolutely sure?

GRETEL

Hansel... he left us.

HANSEL

He did?

GRETEL

He did. We're alone.

HANSEL

I don't like being alone.

GRETEL

Oh, well...I don't either.

HANSEL

Hold my hand... I want to go home! I want to go home!

GRETEL

Quick, let's look for the crumbs of bread.

THEY BOTH CRAWL AROUND LOOKING FOR THE CRUMBS.

HANSEL

I can't see them.

GRETEL

You silly fruitfly, of course they are right here... under your nose...

HANSEL

No they're not!

GRETEL

I'll find them, I'll find them, I have to find everything myself! Here they... uh, no...here they...

THE SOUND OF BIRDS OFF IN THE DISTANCE.

HANSEL

Gretel? The birds ate the crumbs.

GRETEL

Our way home...

HANSEL

We can't find our way home...

A SOUND OF AN OWL HOOTING.

GRETEL

Uhm... let's not stand here shaking, let's walk until we see a light from a home. We know what to do! Scared?

HANSEL

Oh, no, no! Me? Scared? I'd crush a bear between my teeth like a nut. I'd...

SOUND OF A CROW CAWING. HANSEL SCREAMS. SUCCEEDS IN ONLY RUNNING ON THE SPOT, HEAD THROWN BACK, ARMS IN THE AIR.

GRETEL TAKES HANSEL BY HIS HAND AND CALMS HIM.

GRETEL

We're not as little as we used to be. Take heart, Hansel, hold my hand.

AT THE LIGHT OF A CANDLE, WE SEE FOR A MOMENT THE FATHER WHO IS COVERING THE MOTHER'S BODY WITH A SHEET

A BEAUTIFUL SNOW-WHITE BIRD APPEARS FLYING OVERHEAD.

GRETEL

Dear bird! We're lost. We're hungry.

HANSEL

What can we eat?

HANSEL

Let's follow her!

GRETEL

But you sure we should follow her?

HANSEL

No. Are you?

HANSEL AND GRETEL

Follow her!

THEY RUN AFTER THE BIRD AND EXIT.

END OF ACT ONE.