



# HANSEL & GRETEL

*By Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm*

Next to a great forest there lived a poor woodcutter with his wife and his two children. The boy's name was Hansel and the girl's name was Gretel. He had but little to eat, and once, when a great famine came to the land, he could no longer provide even their daily bread.

One evening as he was lying in bed worrying about his problems, he sighed and said to his wife, "What is to become of us? How can we feed our children when we have nothing for ourselves?"

"Man, do you know what?" answered the woman. "Early tomorrow morning we will take the two children out into the thickest part of the woods, make a fire for them, and give each of them a little piece of bread, then leave them by themselves and go off to our work. They will not find their way back home, and we will be rid of them."

"No, woman," said the man. "I will not do that. How could I bring myself to abandon my own children alone in the woods? Wild animals would soon come and tear them to pieces."

"Oh, you fool," she said, "then all four of us will starve. All you can do is to plane the boards for our coffins." And she gave him no peace until he agreed.

"But I do feel sorry for the poor children," said the man.

The two children had not been able to fall asleep because of their hunger, and they heard what the stepmother had said to the father. Gretel cried bitter tears and said to Hansel, "It is over with us!"

"Be quiet, Gretel," said Hansel, "and don't worry. I know what to do."



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And as soon as the adults had fallen asleep, he got up, pulled on his jacket, opened the lower door, and crept outside. The moon was shining brightly, and the white pebbles in front of the house were glistening like silver coins. Hansel bent over and filled his jacket pockets with them, as many as would fit.

Then he went back into the house and said, "Don't worry, Gretel. Sleep well. God will not forsake us."

Then he went back to bed.



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At daybreak, even before sunrise, the woman came and woke the two children. "Get up, you lazybones. We are going into the woods to fetch wood." Then she gave each one a little piece of bread, saying, "Here is something for midday. Don't eat it any sooner, for you'll not get any more."

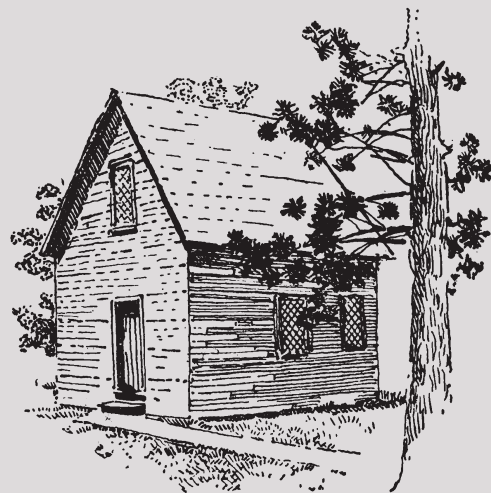
Gretel put the bread under her apron, because Hansel's pockets were full of stones. Then all together they set forth into the woods. After they had walked a little way, Hansel began stopping again and again and looking back toward the house. The father said, "Hansel, why are you stopping and looking back? Pay attention now, and don't forget your legs."

"Oh, father," said Hansel, "I am looking at my white cat that is sitting on the roof and wants to say good-bye to me."

The woman said, "You fool, that isn't your cat. That's the morning sun shining on the chimney."

However, Hansel had not been looking at his cat but instead had been dropping the shiny pebbles from his pocket onto the path. When they arrived in the middle of the woods, the father said, "You children gather some wood, and I will make a fire so you won't freeze."

Hansel and Gretel gathered together some twigs, a pile as high as a small mountain.



The twigs were set afire, and when the flames were burning well, the woman said, "Lie down by the fire and rest. We will go into the woods to cut wood. When we are finished, we will come back and get you."

Hansel and Gretel sat by the fire. When midday came each one ate his little piece of bread. Because they could hear the blows of an ax, they thought that the father was nearby. However, it was not an ax. It was a branch that he had tied to a dead tree and that the wind was beating back and forth. After they had sat there a long time, their eyes grew weary and closed, and they fell sound sleep. When they finally awoke, it was dark at night. Gretel began to cry and said, "How will we get out of woods?" Hansel comforted her, "Wait a little until the moon comes up, and then we'll find the way."