

# Excerpt terms and conditions



This excerpt is available to assist you in the play selection process.

You may view, print and download any of our excerpts for perusal purposes.

Excerpts are not intended for performance, classroom or other academic use. In any of these cases you will need to purchase playbooks via our website or by phone, fax or mail.

A short excerpt is not always indicative of the entire work, and we strongly suggest reading the whole play before planning a production or ordering a cast quantity.

*Dramatic Publishing*



# **The Gingerbread House in the Forest**

Adapted from the Grimm story

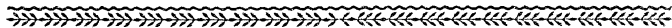
"Hansel and Gretel"

by

ANNE COULTER MARTENS



THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY



\*\*\* NOTICE \*\*\*

The amateur and stock acting rights to this work are controlled exclusively by THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY without whose permission in writing no performance of it may be given. Royalty fees are given in our current catalogue and are subject to change without notice. Royalty must be paid every time a play is performed whether it is presented for charity or for profit and whether or not admission is charged. *A play is performed anytime it is acted before an audience.* All inquiries concerning amateur and stock rights should be addressed to: THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, P.O. Box 109, Woodstock, Illinois 60098.

COPYRIGHT LAW GIVES THE AUTHOR OR HIS AGENT  
THE EXCLUSIVE RIGHT TO MAKE COPIES.

This law provides authors with a fair return for their creative efforts. Authors earn their living from the royalties they receive from book sales and from the performance of their work. Conscientious observance of copyright law is not only ethical, it encourages authors to continue their creative work.

THE GINGERBREAD HOUSE IN THE FOREST

is fully protected by copyright. *No alterations, deletions or substitutions may be made in the work without the prior written consent of the publisher. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, videotape, film, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. It may not be performed either by professionals or amateurs without payment of royalty. All rights, including but not limited to the professional, motion picture, radio, television, videotape, foreign language, tabloid, recitation, lecturing, publication, and reading are reserved.* On all programs this notice should appear: Produced by special arrangement with THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY of Woodstock, Illinois.

©MMLXVII, By

THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY

All Rights Reserved

Printed in the United States of America  
(THE GINGERBREAD HOUSE IN THE FOREST)

---

---

THE GINGERBREAD HOUSE  
IN THE FOREST

*A Play in Two Acts*

For Sixteen Characters and Extras (Optional)\*

---

CHARACTERS

HANSEL  
GRETEL  
JOHANN..... *their father*  
KATRINA..... *a friend*  
NADA..... *a witch*  
FRIEDA } ..... *playmates*  
ROLF }  
QUINCY..... *an owl*  
SCATTER }  
WOODY } ..... *wood elves*  
LORNA }  
FANCY }  
SUGAR COOKIE  
CHOCOLATE CHIP COOKIE } ..... *Cookie children*  
APPLE SAUCE COOKIE }  
GINGERSNAP COOKIE }  
FIELD MICE..... *optional--but too cute to be omitted*

PLACE: *Close to a forest in Germany.*

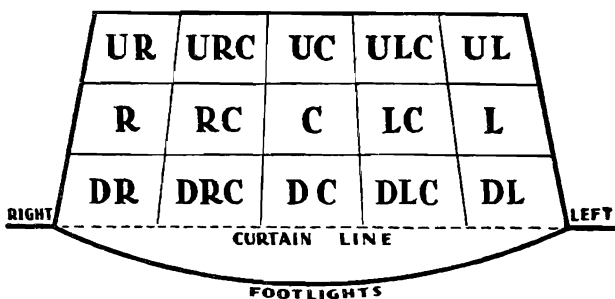
TIME: *Quite a little while ago.*

---

\*The size of the cast may be changed by using more or fewer wood elves, cookie children, or field mice.

---

## CHART OF STAGE POSITIONS



### STAGE POSITIONS

*Upstage* means away from the footlights, *downstage* means toward the footlights, and *right* and *left* are used with reference to the actor as he faces the audience. R means *right*, L means *left*, U means *up*, D means *down*, C means *center*, and these abbreviations are used in combination, as: U R for *up right*, R C for *right center*, D L C for *down left center*, etc. One will note that a position designated on the stage refers to a general territory, rather than to a given point.

---

NOTE: Before starting rehearsals, chalk off your stage or rehearsal space as indicated above in the *Chart of Stage Positions*. Then teach your actors the meanings and positions of these fundamental terms of stage movement by having them walk from one position to another until they are familiar with them. The use of these abbreviated terms in directing the play saves time, speeds up rehearsals, and reduces the amount of explanation the director has to give to his actors.

---

---

# ACT ONE

## Scene One

---

**SCENE:** The woodcutter's cottage and yard. The stage is cut in half by a low divider which extends from upstage for several feet toward downstage and indicates a wall of the cottage. The framework of a window with checked curtains may be placed on top of it. To the right of this divider is the interior of the cottage. There is a plain wooden table with a few chairs near it. Upstage is a wooden cupboard, on top of which are displayed a few figurines carved from wood. On the table are three mugs, one larger than the others, each with a name on it. The left part of the stage is an area outside the cottage. It has several stylized shrubs of various heights, and a large irregular stone surrounded by a grass-like effect. In the corner U L several taller shrubs are grouped to conceal a small stepladder. This is directly in front of an entrance U L. Other entrances are UR, DL and DR.)

**AT RISE OF CURTAIN:** HANSEL and GRETEL, with ROLF and FRIEDA, friends of their own age, are playing a chanting, dancing game at stage L, using the large stone as a center. All are dressed in colorful peasant clothes of the period. Their hands are joined, and they chant rhythmically as they dance around the stone. As they are doing this, SCATTER, a scatter-brained little elf, peeks in from behind the

shrubbery D L. She wears an elf costume of brown decorated with green leaves. After a moment or two she disappears again.)

## CHILDREN.

Apple, berry, pumpkin pie,  
We will have them by and by.

Honey gold and sugar sweet,  
We will have them all to eat.

Make the circle big and round.  
(Pause and drop hands.)  
Tap your feet upon the ground.  
(They do this.)

Clap your hands a-one-two-three,  
Clap your hands and bow to me.  
(Do this.)

Clap your hands and tap your feet,  
We will have a feast to eat.

Apple pie a-one-two-three,  
(Clap hands.)  
Berry pie a-one-two-three,  
(Clap.)  
Pumpkin pie a-one-two-three,  
(Clap.)  
Oh, how happy we will be!

(They join hands again and dance around the stone. Then HANSEL breaks away.)

HANSEL. Apple pie! Berry pie! I'm tired of this game.

ROLF. Silly girl-stuff.

FRIEDA. But we are going to have apple pie for supper.

GRETEL (with unconscious yearning). Apple pie----

FRIEDA. What are you going to have, Gretel?

GRETEL. I'm not quite sure. Our papa's not home yet. (Sits on the stone.)

HANSEL (proudly). He had to stop at the manor house to get paid for that big load of wood he cut last week.

GRETEL. Then he'll bring home lots and lots of things to eat.

ROLF. Mama's fixing stew with meat and dumplings.

FRIEDA. Carrots and potatoes, too.

ROLF. And fresh bread with butter. I'm hungry now!

FRIEDA. We'd better hurry home.

ROLF. Walk part way with us.

HANSEL. But Papa will soon be home.

GRETEL. And it's getting dark.

FRIEDA. Just a little way. Please?

HANSEL. All right, just a little way. But no more games about apple pie.

ROLF (chanting). Hansel's hungry, Hansel's hungry!

HANSEL (too loudly). I am not!

GRETEL. I'm not one bit hungry, either. So let's go. (GRETEL dances off, leading the way D L. GRETEL turns around and SCATTER disappears.) I saw one, I saw one!

HANSEL. Saw what?

GRETEL (excitedly). A wood elf! (Points D L.)

FRIEDA. I don't see anything.

ROLF. More silly girl-stuff. There aren't any wood elves.

GRETEL (unsure now). I think I saw one.

HANSEL (chanting tauntingly). Gretel believes in elves! Gretel believes in witches!

---



GRETEL. There's a witch in the Black Forest.

ROLF. Who said so?

GRETEL. Everybody says so!

HANSEL. I don't believe in witches.

ROLF. Me, either. Come on! (Goes out D.R.)

The others follow him out, but GRETEL first pauses to look back again. Disappointed, she goes out after them. As soon as they have gone, SCATTER comes dancing in, giving a pleased little giggle. She dances around the stone, chanting.)

SCATTER.

Pitter-patter, skitter-scatter,  
What a pretty place to play!  
Chitter-chatter, mitter-matter,  
Dance the merry hours away.

(Pauses, then tries the children's song.)

Apple, berry, pumpkin pie,  
We will have them by and by.

(Stops suddenly. Then she chants her own rhyme.)

Pitter-patter, skitter-scatter,  
I'll have berries without pie,  
Chitter-chatter, mitter-matter,  
I'll have cherries by and by.

(SCATTER finishes her dance by striking an airy, graceful pose on top of the stone. Her back is to U L and she does not see NADA, the witch, whose head appears above the tall shrubbery. NOTE: She is standing on the stepladder. NADA wears a black witch's hat and cape, and has straggly gray hair which half covers her face, and a very ugly nose made so with nose putty.)

WOODY (calling from offstage D L). Yoo hoo!  
Scatter!

LORNA (calling). Scatter! Where are you?

(Nada's head disappears. SCATTER giggles and runs to hide behind a shrub. Three wood elves come in D L. WOODY is a sensible little fellow, LORNA is friendly and helpful, and pretty little FANCY is rather selfish, preoccupied with her curls and with the necklace of leaves or flowers she wears.)

FANCY. Probably lost again!

WOODY. I've told her and told her to stay in the Green Woods. (As he goes to look behind the shrub where SCATTER is, she dances quickly behind another one.)

LORNA. Always running away from us. (Looks behind a shrub.) Scatter!

FANCY. And she never watches where she's going. (WOODY and LORNA converge on the shrub where SCATTER is hiding. She giggles and comes dancing out, eluding them and going toward the divider.)

WOODY. I knew you were here somewhere.

SCATTER. I've found a pretty little cottage. Come and see!

LORNA. But we're not supposed to leave the Green Woods.

FANCY. And we're never, never to go into the Black Forest where the witch lives.

SCATTER. The witch can't hurt us. We can always make an elf ring and shut her out. (Goes into the cottage.) A girl and a boy live here. (At table.) Names on the mugs. (Picks up each one in turn.) Gretel. Hansel. And Johann. He must be their father.

WOODY. Let's go now.

SCATTER. Are there only three? Don't they have a

mother?

FANCY. Who cares?

SCATTER. I'd like to talk to children . . . just once.

WOODY (taking her by the hand). Come on, Scatter.

LORNA (taking her other hand). They might come back.

FANCY. Some children don't believe in wood elves.

SCATTER. Then maybe I won't believe in children!

(From offstage DR Gretel can be heard chanting. SCATTER giggles and hurries DL with the other elves.)

GRETEL (offstage). Apple, berry, pumpkin pie . . .

(The elves go out DL. The head of NADA the witch appears again above the high shrubbery, then is gone. GRETEL and HANSEL come in DR.)

HANSEL. Don't sing about food!

GRETEL. I'm so hungry!

HANSEL. I'm starving! (Goes into cottage and sits down.)

GRETEL. Me, too! (Sits down.)

HANSEL. I wonder why Papa doesn't come.

GRETEL. Maybe he's buying bread and cheese and milk . . . even honey! (She gets a ball from the cupboard and bounces it.) Want to play?

HANSEL (shortly). Too hungry.

GRETEL (serious now). Hansel, tell me truly.

(Pause.) Are we poor?

HANSEL (after a pause). Yes.

GRETEL. But Papa works hard and you bring in the wood and I keep the house clean. (Pause. She sighs.) If Mother hadn't died so long ago we'd be happy, wouldn't we?

HANSEL. When Papa earns enough money, he might

get married again.

GRETEL (pleased). To Katrina? I'd just love,  
love, love to have Katrina for our mother!

HANSEL. The Widow Nada is nice, too. And she  
likes children.

GRETEL (skeptically). She tells Papa that.

HANSEL. Often.

GRETEL. She pats me on the head and says,  
"Hello, Gretel." But she tells you what a fine,  
handsome boy you are. That's why you like her.

HANSEL. You're being silly!

GRETEL. Anyway, why would she want to marry  
Papa?

HANSEL. Because he's big and strong and nice,  
and she already has plenty of money.

GRETEL. Just the same, I don't like her.

HANSEL. Why?

GRETEL (chanting).

When I tell you I dislike her,  
You ask why.  
In a single word I'll give you  
My reply.

It's her nose, nose, nose,  
And it show, shows, shows!

If you have to have a reason,  
That is it;  
And it's not a very good one,  
I admit.

And her clothes, clothes, clothes,  
And her pose, pose, pose!

I don't think she's really friendly  
Or sincere;  
And I have a funny feeling  
When she's near.

It's her nose, clothes, pose,  
Just suppose, pose, pose . . .

She's a witch!

HANSEL. You imagine things.

GRETEL. Sometimes they're true.

HANSEL. Not this time. (Worried.) I can't understand why Papa's so late! (Goes to entrance of cottage.) Oh, here's Katrina.

(KATRINA, sweet and gentle, comes in D.R. She wears a peasant dress.)

KATRINA. Hello, there.

GRETEL (happily). Katrina, Katrina, I'm so glad to see you! (Hugs KATRINA.)

KATRINA (looking around as she enters cottage). No supper yet?

HANSEL. We're waiting for Papa.

KATRINA. Then I'll fix you something. Bread, cheese . . . get me a good sharp knife.

GRETEL. We . . . don't have anything at all.

KATRINA. Oh, you poor darlings!

GRETEL. Poor?

KATRINA. I didn't really mean it that way. You're both young and strong and you have a nice cottage, and Johann is a good, hardworking papa.

HANSEL. But why isn't he home?

KATRINA. There's been some delay. (Briskly.)

Gretel, you fix the table and I'll bring food from my place.

GRETEL (cheered). I like you, Katrina.

KATRINA. Thank you, dear. You have a tablecloth?

GRETEL. For special. (Opens cupboard and gets out a checked cloth.)

KATRINA. Put it on. It will cheer Johann when he

comes home.

HANSEL. I'll help. (They remove the mugs and spread the cloth on the table, then put the mugs back.)

KATRINA (at cupboard). I see your papa has made some more wood carvings.

GRETEL (getting out wooden plates). Every night he works on them.

HANSEL. Do you like them?

KATRINA. They're beautiful!

GRETEL. He's going to make a little wooden doll for me.

HANSEL. And a woodcutter for me.

KATRINA. How kind he is!

GRETEL. Do you like our papa?

KATRINA. Of course.

HANSEL. How do you feel about big children like us? (They go close to her and she puts an arm around each one.)

KATRINA. You already know.

GRETEL. Katrina, would you like to get married?

KATRINA (embarrassed). What a question!

HANSEL. Just in case . . . somebody . . . should ask you.

KATRINA. I've already been asked, thank you. But not by the right person.

GRETEL. Is our papa the right person?

KATRINA. You mustn't pry. (She goes to the open end of the cottage and GRETEL follows her.)

GRETEL. Then I know the answer. (Hugs KATRINA.)

(JOHANN comes in D L. He wears work clothes and has a woodcutter's ax over his shoulder. There is discouragement in his walk.)

KATRINA. Hello, Johann.

GRETEL (going to him). Papa!

HANSEL (going to him). We were worried about you.

KATRINA. Is everything all right, Johann?

HANSEL. Did you get the money?

JOHANN. No. They were away. I'm sorry, young ones. (Leans his ax in a corner, sits at table and rests his chin in his hands.)

GRETEL (putting an arm around his shoulder). It's not your fault.

HANSEL. We're not very hungry. Are we, Gretel?

GRETEL. Hardly at all.

KATRINA (briskly). Yes, you are, and I'm going to share what I have with all of you.

JOHANN. I can't let you do that.

KATRINA. Come, Johann, smile. There are better days ahead.

HANSEL. Maybe you could borrow a little money?

JOHANN. Who would loan to me?

HANSEL. The Widow Nada has plenty.

GRETEL. No!

HANSEL. Gretel doesn't like her because she has an ugly nose.

(As they talk, the witch NADA appears again behind the tall shrubbery U L. Then she gets down [from the stepladder] with a little bounce as if she has flown down. She is astride an old broom and carries a very large cloth bag and a picnic basket. From the bag she takes a pretty apron and a blonde wig. Then very quickly she removes her black witch's robe and her hat, putting them into the bag. Under the robe she has on an attractive peasant-type dress. She ties the apron around her waist, pushes the straggly gray hair back from her face and puts on the blonde wig. Aside from her ugly nose, she now

looks quite presentable. Inside the cottage,  
the conversation goes on.)

JOHANN. Gretel, that's a foolish reason. Nada is a fine, generous woman and she loves children.

GRETEL. How do you know?

JOHANN. She said so.

GRETEL. I don't believe her!

JOHANN. Enough, Gretel!

HANSEL. I like her.

GRETEL. I'm sorry, Papa. Maybe she is nice.

KATRINA (near the cupboard). Your wood carvings are beautiful, Johann.

JOHANN (surprised). You really think so?

GRETEL. He just sits down with a piece of wood and a knife, and all of a sudden something special happens.

KATRINA. Like this little squirrel? I adore it.

JOHANN. Then it's yours to keep.

KATRINA. Oh, thank you! (Puts little carved figure in her pocket.)

JOHANN. They're just little nothings to pass the time.

KATRINA. They're better than any I've seen.

GRETEL. Will you carve me a wood elf some time?

JOHANN (surprised). A wood elf?

HANSEL. Gretel thought she saw a wood elf today. Are there really such things as elves?

JOHANN. I very much doubt it.

GRETEL. How about witches . . . are there witches?

JOHANN. All that is just foolish superstition, I think.

GRETEL. But you're not sure?

JOHANN. We should never say we're sure about



anything until we know.

KATRINA. I've heard stories . . .

JOHANN. Not you, too, Katrina?

KATRINA. The woodcutters never go into the Black Forest, do they?

JOHANN. Because it's so far from here.

KATRINA. Is that the only reason? (They pause, considering this. NADA is now ready for her visit to the cottage. She puts the broom behind the shrubbery, picks up the bag and picnic basket, and pauses near the shrubbery to chant her song.)

NADA.  
Because I dress  
In plain attire,  
They'll never guess,  
Nor yet inquire.

All this is sham,  
And they don't know  
A witch I am,  
He, he, ho, ho!

Let's go!  
(Starts for the cottage.)

KATRINA. Did I hear a voice just now? (Goes to opening of cottage as NADA approaches with a bright smile on her face.) Oh . . . Nada.

NADA. What are you doing here?

KATRINA. The children need food.

NADA. Oh, no, they don't! (Indicates her picnic basket. JOHANN and the children come to the doorway.)

JOHANN. Nada, it was nice of you to stop by.

NADA. I've been thinking about you, Johann, and the dear little ones.

GRETEL. What were you thinking?