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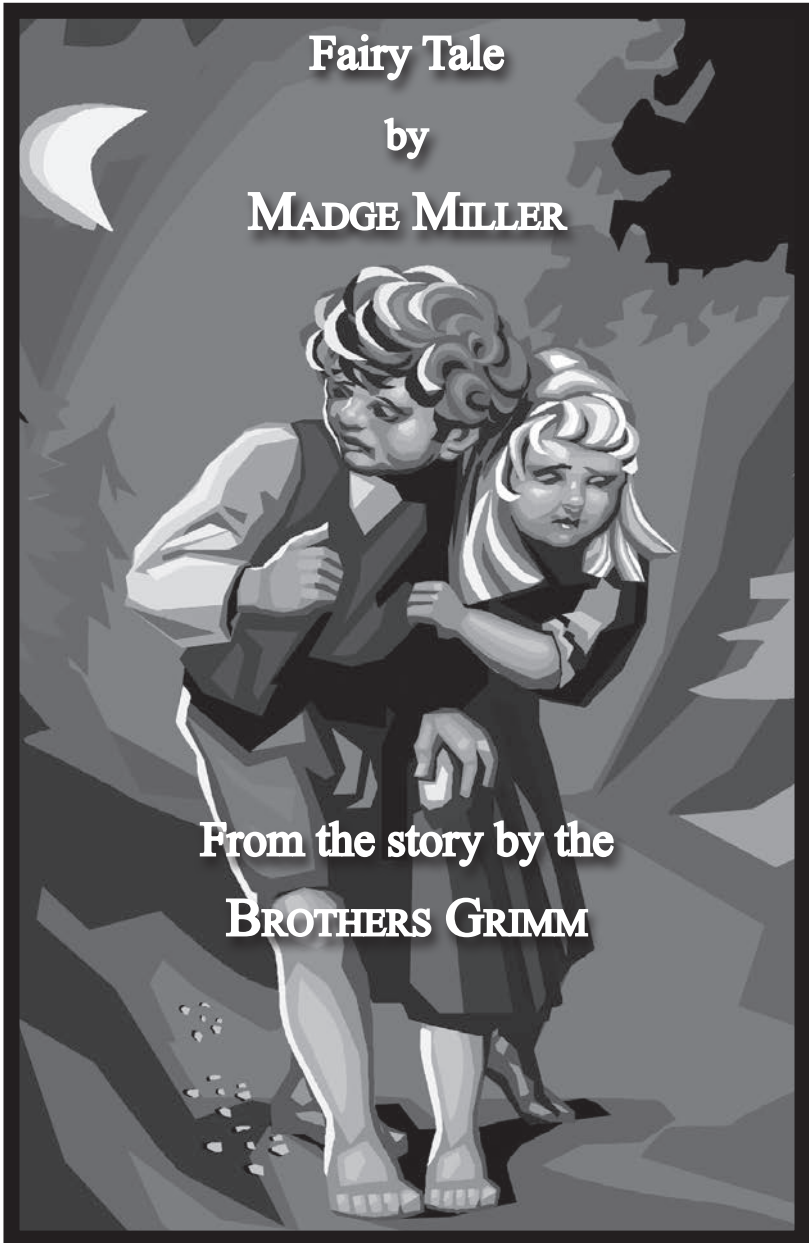
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## **Family Plays**

# Hansel and Gretel



# Hansel and Gretel

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Hansel and Gretel

# HANSEL AND GRETEL

*Dramatized by*

MADGE MILLER



**Family Plays**

311 Washington St., Woodstock, IL 60098

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## CAST OF CHARACTERS

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HANSEL

GRETEL

ERNST, their Father

KATRIN, their Stepmother

THE WICKED WITCH

THE FOREST FAIRY

TRUDI, the Black Cat

FOUR EXTRAS (more, if desired)

---

TIME: Long, Long Ago

PLACE: The Land of Make-Believe

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## SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

Act One: Scene 1—The Hut of Ernst, the Woodcutter  
Scene 2—The Darkest Part of the Forest

Act Two: The Witch's Cottage

Act Three: The Witch's Cottage

The premiere production of this play was given by the Pittsburgh Children's Theatre, under the direction of Miss Grace Price, of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

However, the pictures used in this book were taken from a subsequent production of this play, given by the Portland Civic Theatre, of Portland, Oregon, under the direction of Miss Doris Smith. The pictures are reproduced here by her courtesy.



## PRODUCTION NOTES

### ESSENTIAL SET PIECES

#### ACT ONE

Scene 1. Woodcutter's hut (3-fold screen or profile piece)

Tree Stump

Scene 2. Tree cut-outs

Bushes

#### ACT TWO

Witch's cottage

Cage

Oven (large box with hinged door)

Lollipop fence

Box for Fairy (must be strong enough to hold Gretel)

Toys (dolls, tops, etc.)

### PROPERTIES

#### ACT ONE

Bundles of wood . . . . . *Stage Dressing*

Twig broom . . . . . *Stage Dressing*

Fiddle . . . . . *Ernst*

Napkin . . . . . *Katrin*

Two pails . . . . . *Ernst*

Loaf of bread . . . . . *Hansel*

White Pebbles . . . . . *Forest Fairy*

Three small parcels of food . . . . . *Katrin*

#### ACT TWO

Twig . . . . . *Hansel*

Cake (fastened to house) . . . . . *Hansel and Gretel*

Cane . . . . . *Witch*

Bowl of milk . . . . . *Witch*

Key on cord . . . . . *Witch*

Tray of dishes of food . . . . . *Witch*

Dish containing bone and dried peas . . . . . *Witch*

Chain attached to cottage . . . . . *Witch*

#### ACT THREE

Pail and scrub brush . . . . . *Gretel*

Bunch of herbs . . . . . *Gretel*

Tray of food . . . . . *Witch*

Bone . . . . . *Hansel*

Book of charms . . . . . *Witch*

Sprig of willow . . . . . *Trudi*

Apron and Kerchief . . . . . *Hansel*

Water container . . . . . *Ernst*

## PRODUCTION NOTES

### COSTUMES

*Hansel and Gretel, Katrin and Ernst:* Though their costumes are rough and ragged, they should be bright enough to lend colour to the stage picture. They should be designed not only to complement and extend the characterizations, but to fit the style, locale and period chosen for the production.

*Witch:* Traditional black robe and pointed hat are suggested but variations can be made to suit production.

*Forest Fairy:* Flowing, dainty and ethereal in line—soft, cool colour.

*Trudi:* Cat's costume can be made from terry cloth or other rough material dyed black. Sleeper patterns can be used with close fitting hood attached. Costume should not cover face. Instead, a half-mask, with whiskers attached will suffice. The costume must be easily removed and a zipper running down the front will make the transformation easier.

*Children and Trudi:* Skirts and blouses with aprons and kerchiefs, or shorts and jumpers. Bright elementary colours.

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### MUSIC AND SOUND

There are several places where music is necessary to the action of the play and recorded music played on a machine with volume control is perhaps the easiest way of supplying it. The Humperdink music from the opera is often used.

For the folk-dance and the songs of the children and the Witch, either original music or folk melodies would be suitable so long as the proper mood is sustained.

The Forest Voices and the hissing of the fire can be made vocally. To give variation to the voices, a voice box or a megaphone can be used.

The wood chopping can be simulated by striking two small logs together.



## ACT ONE

*(The scene is a clearing in front of a small, delapidated hut, LC, at the forest's edge. Several bundles of cut wood and a twig broom lean against the wall of the hut.)*

*On a tree stump down R sits a careworn man of forty, in rough peasant garb, playing a crude fiddle. Two children, a girl of twelve and a boy of fourteen, are performing a stamping, hand-clapping, elbow-hooking kind of folk-dance. They are clean, attractive youngsters, but weary-looking when in repose, shabbily dressed and without shoes.*

*Suddenly the cottage door is flung open and a hard-faced, slatternly woman emerges. At her harsh words the merriment ceases abruptly.)*

KATRIN: So! *(snatching the fiddle from her husband)* Will you play the clown when we are starving!

ERNST: But . . . but, good wife . . .

KATRIN: And you, Hansel, Gretel, will you dance as if at court while work is waiting? Scrubbing, washing, mending! *(she advances upon them threatening; they cringe)* Lazy, good-for-nothing idlers!

ERNST *(stepping between her and them)*: No, no, Katrin! It was not their doing. I brought out the fiddle and began to play to ease my hunger.

KATRIN (*indignantly*): Your hunger? Pah!

HANSEL: Yes, and we began to dance because that way we could forget our hunger.

KATRIN (*contemptuously*): Your hunger! Nonsense! What of me? Do I have rich food in abundance? Am I not starving too? (*turning on Ernst*) And what do you do . . . you, their worthless father? Do you bring me any money so that I may buy a scrap of bread? Ernst, the woodcutter! (*indicating the cut wood*) Can we eat your wood?

ERNST: But Katrin, every day I strap the wood upon my back and walk from town to town, calling its price.

KATRIN: And bring it home again unsold!

ERNST: They have no money in the towns, no more than we. Everywhere there is hunger. All the crops have failed!

GRETEL (*timidly*): In our small garden nothing grows, although I weed and water . . .

KATRIN (*to her*): Bah! Your work is poorly done. (*turning back to Ernst*) I tell you, husband, it is all your doing that we starve. (*sinking down on the tree stump, dropping the fiddle to the ground beside her*) What will become of us? What will become of me?

ERNST: In my father's time, and even when I was a boy, all was very different. Then the crops were large and flowers bloomed and there was wealth enough for all.

HANSEL: Then what happened, Father?

ERNST: All this great good fortune was the work of the Fairy of this Forest, a kind spirit who looked after those of us who lived near or in her kingdom.

GRETEL: But where is she now?

KATRIN (*springing up angrily*): Where she always was, in your father's mind! There is no such person. Our misfortune is his doing! (*glaring at the children*) Yes, and yours! (*pacing to and fro*) And I, poor, friendless creature that I am, must endure it since I . . . (*becoming aware of Ernst's gestures toward her feet*) Well?

ERNST: Take care, my dear, that you do not step upon the fiddle. It is precious to me . . .

KATRIN: Fiddle, is it? (*snatching it up*) Can you think of nothing else? Say 'Kindling,' rather! I shall break it into bits across my knee to use as firewood! (*She is about to do so*) Wait a moment. Someone in the village offered you a few coins for it once . . . oh, years ago. Who was it?

ERNST: I . . . I don't remember.

KATRIN (*catching Hansel by the arm*): Who, Hansel? Tell me.

HANSEL (*stubbornly*): I forget too.

KATRIN: Stubborn rogue! I'll shake it out of you. (*releasing her grasp suddenly*): No matter. I remember now. It was old Otto, the lame cobbler. (*thrusting the fiddle into Hansel's hands*) Here, boy, take

this to him. Sell it for whatever he will pay, and with the money buy us bread. Go with him, Gretel.

GRETEL (*to her father*): But your fiddle . . .

ERNST: Yes, go buy us bread. It is more needful. (*whispering to the children as they pass him*) I shall buy it back.

KATRIN: Stop! I'll fetch a cloth to wrap the bread in. No greedy fingers breaking bits and corners off it.

(*She goes into the cottage, slamming the door behind her. The three look wistfully at one another.*)

HANSEL: Was there really a Forest Fairy, Father?

ERNST(*sitting down on the stump wearily*): So they said.

GRETEL (*leaning against his knee*): What did she look like?

ERNST: I can't say, Gretel, I never saw her.

GRETEL: Oh, I want to see her! She'll be beautiful, and wear a handsome gown of . . . green, I should imagine. Such a gown as my first doll will wear . . . the one I'll call Dorinda!

HANSEL (*scornfully*): Dolls and fairies! When a cat can speak you'll find them both . . . but not before! (*kicking the ground angrily*) The Forest Fairy's gone. That's why we're poor and have no food. She left her people. Maybe she's even dead!

ERNST: Not dead. They live for ever, Hansel. But why she doesn't help us is a mystery.

KATRIN (*coming out with a napkin which she thrusts at Gretel*) Such a time I had to find it! Every last thing put away wrong. (*glaring at the children*): Careless wretches! Now be off with you. (*they start off UR*) And see you get a large loaf! (*they exit, she runs after them to call*) Not a crumb of it's to pass your lips, remember! (*calling off*) Take the short cut, and run swiftly.

ERNST: The short cut, Katrin? Through the forest? But it's dangerous! (*going UR*) I'll call them back to take the road.

KATRIN (*sharply*) Come here, Ernst. Let them go.

ERNST: But . . .

KATRIN (*ominously*): They may well take a far more dangerous path than that . . . and soon.

ERNST (*stopping abruptly*): What do you mean, Wife?

KATRIN: Why, these hard days that have come upon us . . . that is what I mean. No money and no food, and yet four mouths to feed.

ERNST (*coming down, bewildered*): Yes, there are four of us, the children and we too.

KATRIN(*catching his arm, persuasively*): There must not *be* four, Ernst. If there were only two, why then, a loaf of bread would do for days. Do you understand me, husband? Do you see what must be done?

ERNST (*horrified*): Katrin! Wife, you cannot mean. . . .

KATRIN (*pushing him down on the stump*): Sit down and listen. Everything is planned. This very hour, when your children return, we shall

take them into the forest—the thickest part. We shall say we go to search for berries, but we two shall slip away, and leave them there alone.

ERNST (*springing up*) No, Katrin, no! I could never find it in my heart to leave my children in the forest.

KATRIN: Wait and listen! Would you have them die of hunger here? Someone will find them in the forest, surely, and take care of them. Why, if they stay, they'll starve!

ERNST: But to leave them in the forest—no, I cannot!

KATRIN: Nonsense! It will be as I have said, I tell you. They must go away, your Hansel and your Gretel. There is nothing else to be done, husband. Haven't you noticed their thin arms and their pale cheeks?

ERNST: I won't listen to you. Never could I. . . .

KATRIN (*catching his arm in a vice-like grip*) Then shall I send them to be serfs on some estate, to draw their heavy ploughs on bleeding feet, harnessed like oxen? Do you want that for your children! It will be that, surely, if you do not help me with this plan. (*thrusting him toward the cottage door*) Into the house with you! Fetch the berry pails and take them to the spring to wash. Be quick!

(*He scuttles into the cottage. Hansel and Gretel run out into the clearing, panting from their hasty trip; Hansel, upon hearing Katrin's next words, pulls Gretel with him behind the bushes upstage extreme R, so that they may eavesdrop. Katrin comes down C.*)

Ah, good! Hansel and Gretel will trouble us no more. They cannot live here any longer and I'll not be forced to see them starve before my very eyes. Oh, how I long for luscious puddings, pies and cakes, and sweets of every sort! I vow if we could sit down only once before a groaning table, I should eat myself to death! (*lost for a moment in avid reflection, she pulls herself together, glares at the cottage door and shouts*) Husband! The pails! Why do you linger?

ERNST (*emerging with two battered pails*) I—I have only just found them.

KATRIN (*pushing him off UL*) Take them to the spring, wash them, and return at once. They may be here at any moment.

ERNST (*exiting UL*): Oh, my children! My poor children!

KATRIN (*calling off after him*): Cease your wailing! Would you have them overhear? (*going to look off UR*) Why don't they come? (*As she comes down, rubbing her hands greedily, Hansel, with Gretel by the hand, darts out from behind the shelter of the bushes and off UR.*) I am eager now to be rid of them for ever. (*facing upstage, hands on hips, calling raucously*) Hansel! Gretel! Are you there?

GRETEL (*off UR*): Yes, Stepmother!

HANSEL (*off UR*): We are just coming!

KATRIN (*as they come on UR*): Why do you loiter? Lazy good-for-nothings! Give me bread. (*snatching a cloth-covered loaf from*

*Hansel*) What? Is it no bigger? You have not bargained well with Otto. I might have known. Ah, well, I shall go in to cut it for our supper. *(suddenly changing her approach as she is about to enter the cottage)* And what do you think, my darlings? Your loving father with my help has planned a jolly picnic for you. We shall take our bread into the forest and pick berries and then eat what we have gathered. *(pinching Gretel's cheek)* Does that please you, duckling?

GRETEL *(faintly)*: Yes, indeed.

KATRIN *(chucking Hansel roughly under the chin)*: And you, my pet?

HANSEL *(with feigned enthusiasm)* Of course, dear Stepmother.

KATRIN *(with a sinister smile)*: Good! Good! *(she enters the cottage.)*

GRETEL *(as soon as the door has closed)*: Oh, Hansel! Brother Hansel! What shall we do?

HANSEL *(indicating the door)* Hush, Gretel. *(softly, coming down)* I don't know.

GRETEL *(following)*: But they will take us to the forest, and leave us there!

HANSEL: Yes, Gretel. We must think of a way.

GRETEL: What way? *(despairingly)* Oh, what can we do?

HANSEL *(sitting down on the stump)*: I can't tell yet. Don't cry, little sister. Please don't cry. Let me think. *(rubbing his eyes)* Oh, if I only weren't so sleepy!

GRETEL *(sitting at his feet, leaning against the stump)* Oh, Hansel, I'm afraid. I'm afraid of the forest.

HANSEL: You are tired too. And no wonder! We were up before the sun, and working all day long.

GRETEL: Yes, I am tired.

HANSEL: But we must keep awake to think. . . .

GRETEL *(stifling her sobs, sleepily)* If there were a Forest Fairy she would help us now.

HANSEL *(sliding off the stump to sit at its base beside Gretel)*: Yes, we should only have to say to her, 'Oh Princess' . . .

GRETEL *(her eyes closing)*: No, no, Hansel. 'Oh Gracious Queen' . . .

HANSEL *(his head back against the stump, eyes closed)*: 'Ruler of this Forest, help us. If you still live, tell us what to do.'

*(With a sigh, he falls asleep, as does Gretel. The stage lights dim; a pale green spot marks the entrance of the Forest Fairy DL, and follows her as she dances to faint, mysterious music. She is tall and fair, dressed in flowing pale green draperies, the sleeves of which end in green leaves fastened to her fingers. A cap and slippers of the same leaves, and garlands of pastel flowers about her neck complete the costume.)*

*(The last part of the dance includes the picking up, tossing and catching of one or two white pebbles picked up from the ground. When the dance comes to a close, the Forest Fairy glides off DL. The lights come up. The children almost immediately stretch and yawn.)*

GRETEL (*sitting bolt upright*): Hansel Hansel, I saw her! (*springing up and looking about*). The Forest Fairy!

HANSEL (*sitting up*): So did I! I dreamed she danced for us.

GRETEL (*disappointed*): You . . . dreamed! Then it was just a dream?

HANSEL (*getting up, brushing off his clothes dispiritedly*): Of course. We fell asleep and dreamed the same thing.

GRETEL: But why did we dream of her? Surely there must be a reason?

HANSEL: We had talked about her just before, and how she might have helped us.

GRETEL: Then perhaps that's why she came, to tell us what to do.

HANSEL: But she did nothing—or, at least, not in my dream. She danced, and that was all.

GRETEL (*sadly*): Yes, that was what she did in mine—danced, but so beautifully, and tossed a shiny stone.

HANSEL (*thoughtfully*): A pebble, a white pebble . . . (*kicking the ground*) like these at my feet . . . Gretel, that's it! These white pebbles—gather them quickly in your apron!

GRETEL (*beginning to do so obediently*): But why, Hansel? What good are they?

HANSEL (*gathering them feverishly and dropping them into her upturned apron*): They're our way back. Don't you see? As we go into the forest I shall drop a white pebble every seventh step. Then when the moon is full, we can follow the pebbles back to the cottage.

(*During the above speech the cottage door opens and Katrin appears momentarily, listening. Then she closes the door quietly.*)

GRETEL: Oh, Hansel! Hansel, how clever! They'll be like stepping-stones!

HANSEL: Yes, Gretel, stones for our steps, pebbles leading us home. (*Their father shuffles on UL, head low, carrying the two pails. He raises his head, sees the children watching him, glances toward the cottage, then with fingers to lips, approaches them.*)

ERNST (*in a tense whisper*): Hansel—Gretel, I . . .

KATRIN (*flinging the door open as if lying in wait to do just that*): Ah there you are, Ernst! What a time it took you! The dear children and I are impatient to be off. You have the pails washed and dried with grass? Splendid! (*indicating the smaller*) Give that one to Hansel. Now then, here is the bread for supper. Husband, this is yours (*giving him a small parcel wrapped in cloth*) Put it in the pail. And this for you, dear child. (*giving Hansel a similar small parcel*) Into your pail it goes. And this for darling Gretel. (*maliciously*) Just spread out your apron and I'll wrap your bread in it.

GRETEL: But . . . but my apron . . .

HANSEL (*quickly*): Give me hers too. I can put it in my pail.

KATRIN (*ignoring him*): Come, child, let down your apron. (*as Gretel continues to hold it with its contents up against her, looking imploringly at Hansel*) Then I'll do it for you. (*jerking it out of her hands,*



*causing the pebbles to fall to the ground*) There! What's this? Pebbles? Oh, you naughty girl, to soil your pretty apron! Now then, here's the bread in place of them. That's better, isn't it?

ERNST: But, Katrin, have you saved none for yourself?

KATRIN (*in good spirits over her cleverness*): Yes, husband, here is mine. It is the same as all the rest. (*From her apron tucked up at her waist she draws what appears to be three-quarters of the loaf, then thrusts it back.*) Now, are we ready to set out? (*starting off DL*) Into the forest!

ERNST (*attempting a delaying action*): Oh—oh, my dear! That bit of fish, drying out back. Have you forgotten? It would make a tasty morsel when your appetite grows keen with picking.

KATRIN (*taken off guard*): Yes! To save it for the winter may not now be needful. (*licking her lips in anticipation*) I'll go fetch it! (*she starts for the door but suddenly suspicious, turns back to find Ernst, finger to lips, beckoning the children to him.*) Husband, come with me! I want you at my side. (*She herds him into the cottage ahead of her. The children look at each other helplessly.*)

GRETEL: Our lovely pebbles! I'll go pick them up.

HANSEL: There isn't time. And she'll be watching. (*with sudden inspiration*) But don't worry, Gretel. Give me your bread.

GRETEL: My bread for supper? (*handing it to him*) Here it is.

HANSEL: We'll use our bread instead of pebbles! See! I'll crumble it and put it in the pail. Then every seventh step I'll drop a tiny piece.

It will be white too, and in the moonlight we can find our way back.

GRETEL (*clapping her hands*): Yes?

HANSEL (*as the door begins to open*): Ssh!

(*Gretel tucks her apron up as it was before. The door opens on a heated argument.*)

ERNST (*coming down*): No, I cannot do it! Please, wife. . . .

KATRIN (*following him*): Not a word! Not another word. Go first! We'll follow!

ERNST: But I. . . .

KATRIN (*pointing commandingly off DL*): Husband! Lead the way! (*he exits sorrowfully. She goes next looking back to call*): Come, Gretel! And you, Hansel! Quickly! We have far to go! (*She exits. Gretel is about to exit but Hansel tugs at her sleeve and whispers.*)

HANSEL (*reassuringly, showing her what he holds*): Here is the first bit of bread. Once well into the forest, I shall drop it.

GRETEL (*clutching him*): Oh, Hansel, Can we do it? I'm afraid!

HANSEL: We must! If this should fail us we might never see our home again! (*both look fearfully at the little cottage.*)

KATRIN (*off*): Hansel! Gretel!

HANSEL (*straightening himself resolutely, taking Gretel's hand and calling*): Yes! We come! (*the two children run off L.*)

CURTAIN