

Hansel and Grethel, Part 2

by Jacob Grimm and Wilhelm Grimm *from Grimm's Fairy Stories*

Because there was no food left at home, Hansel and Grethel have been left in the forest by their father and his wife. The children are not able to find their way out of the forest. They have not had anything to eat but berries and a slice of bread.

It was now the third morning since they had left their father's house, and they still walked on; but they only got deeper and deeper into the wood, and Hansel saw that if help did not come very soon they would die of hunger. At about noonday they saw a beautiful snow-white bird sitting upon a bough, which sang so sweetly that they stood still and listened to it. It soon ceased, and spreading its wings flew off; and they followed it until it arrived at a cottage, upon the roof of which it perched; and when they went close up to it they saw that the cottage was made of bread and cakes, and the window-panes were of clear sugar.

"We will go in there," said Hansel, "and have a glorious feast. I will eat a piece of the roof, and you can eat the window. Will they not be sweet?" So Hansel reached up and broke a piece off the roof, in order to see how it tasted, while 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 raps at my door?" and the children answered, "the wind, the wind, the child of heaven"; and they went on eating without interruption.

Hansel thought the roof tasted very nice, so he tore off a great piece; while Grethel broke a large round pane out of the window, and sat down quite contentedly.

Just then the door opened, and a very old woman, walking upon crutches, came out. Hansel and Grethel were so frightened that they let fall what they had in their hands; but the old woman, nodding her head, said, "Ah, you dear children, what has brought you here? Come in and stop with me, and no harm shall befall you"; and so saying 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, and in the back room were two nice little beds, covered with white, where Hansel and Grethel laid themselves down, and thought themselves in heaven.

The old woman behaved very kindly to them, but in reality she was a wicked witch who waylaid children, and built the bread-house in order to entice them in, but as soon as they were in her power she killed them, cooked and ate them, and made a great festival of the day. Witches have red eyes, and cannot see very far; but they have a fine sense of smelling, like wild beasts, so that they know when children approach them. When Hansel and Grethel came near the witch's house she laughed wickedly, saying, "Here come two who shall not escape me."

Early in the morning, before they awoke, she went up to them, and saw how lovingly they lay sleeping, with their chubby red cheeks, and she mumbled to herself, "That will be a good bite." Then she took up Hansel with her rough hands, and shut him up in a little cage with a lattice-door; and although he screamed loudly it was of no use.

Grethel came next, and, shaking her until she awoke, the witch said, "Get up, you lazy thing, and fetch some water to cook something good for your brother, who must remain in that stall and get fat; when he is fat enough I shall eat him." Grethel began to cry, but it was all useless, for the old witch made her do as she wished. 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 that I may feel whether you are getting fat." But Hansel used to stretch out a bone, and the old woman, having very bad sight, thought it was his finger, and wondered very much that he did not get fatter. When four weeks had passed, and Hansel still kept quite lean, she lost all her patience, and would not wait any longer.

"Grethel," she called out in a passion, "get some water quickly; be Hansel fat or lean, this morning I will kill and cook him."

Oh, how the poor little sister grieved, as she was forced to fetch the water, and fast the tears ran down her cheeks! "Dear good God, help us now!" she exclaimed. "Had we only been eaten by the wild beasts in the wood, then we should have died together." But the old witch called out, "Leave off that noise; it will not help you a bit."

So early in the morning Grethel was forced to go out and fill the kettle, and make a fire. "First, we will bake, however," said the old woman; "I have already heated the oven and kneaded the dough"; and so saying, she pushed poor Grethel up to the oven, out of which the flames were burning fiercely. "Creep in," said the witch, "and see if it is hot enough, and then we will put in the bread"; but she intended when Grethel got in to shut up the oven and let her bake, so that she might eat her as well as Hansel. Grethel perceived what her thoughts were, and said, "I do not know how to do it; how shall I get in?"

"You stupid goose," said she, "the opening is big enough. See, I could even get in myself!" and she got up, and put her head into the oven. Then Grethel gave her a push, so that she fell right in, and then shutting the iron door she bolted it! Oh! how horribly she howled; but Grethel ran away, and left the ungodly witch to burn to ashes.

Now she ran to Hansel, and, opening his door, called out, "Hansel, we are saved; the old witch is dead!" So he sprang out, like a bird out of his cage when the door is opened; and they were so glad that they fell upon each other's neck, and kissed each other over and over again.

And now, as there was nothing to fear, they went into the witch's house, where in every corner were caskets full of pearls and precious stones. "These are better than pebbles," said Hansel, putting as many into his pocket as it would hold; while Grethel thought, "I will take some too," and filled her apron full.

"We must be off now," said Hansel, "and get out of this enchanted forest." But when they had walked for two hours they came to a large piece of water. "We cannot get over," said Hansel; "I can see no bridge at

all." "And there is no boat, either," said Grethel; "but there swims a white duck, and I will ask her to help us over." And she sang:

"Little Duck, good little Duck,
Grethel and Hansel, here we stand;
There is neither stile nor bridge,
Take us on your back to land."

So the duck came to them, and Hansel sat himself on, and bade his sister sit behind him. "No," answered Grethel, "that will be too much for the duck; she shall take us over one at a time."

This the good little bird did, and when both were happily arrived on the other side, and had gone a little way, they came to a well-known wood, which they knew the better every step they went, and at last they perceived their father's house. Then they began to run, and, bursting into the house, they fell into their father's arms. He had not had one happy hour since he had left the children in the forest; and his wife was dead. Grethel shook her apron, and the pearls and precious stones rolled out upon the floor, and Hansel threw down one handful after the other out of his pocket. Then all their sorrows were ended, and they lived together in great happiness.

Questions

1. Why did the witch's house look especially wonderful to Hansel and Grethel?
2. How did Hansel fool the witch into thinking he wasn't getting fatter?
3. How did Grethel kill the witch?
4. What happened to the father's wife?

Vocabulary List

Each of the vocabulary words below are used in the reading passage. As you read the passage, pay attention to context clues that suggest the word's meaning.

1. bough
2. wicked
3. waylaid
4. entice
5. fetch
6. kneaded
7. perceived
8. caskets

Context Clues

Using context clues from the sentences in the passage, underline the correct meaning of the word in boldface.

1. "they saw a beautiful snow-white bird sitting upon a **bough**"
 - a. small house or cottage
 - b. branch or limb
 - c. feed barrel or box
 - d. rock; stone

2. "she was a **wicked** witch who waylaid children"
 - a. thin or slender
 - b. excellent; outstanding
 - c. old or aged
 - d. bad; evil

3. "she was a wicked witch who **waylaid** children"
 - a. stopped; detained
 - b. fed; cooked for
 - c. helped or aided
 - d. carried or lifted

4. "built the bread-house in order to **entice** them in"
 - a. entertain or amuse
 - b. welcome; receive
 - c. tempt; attract
 - d. wash or bathe

5. "the poor little sister grieved, as she was forced to **fetch** the water"
 - a. heat or boil
 - b. pour out; drain
 - c. get or bring
 - d. measure; weigh

6. "I have already heated the oven and **kneaded** the dough"
 - a. wanted or desired
 - b. blended or worked
 - c. found; discovered
 - d. cut up; divided

7. "Grethel **perceived** what her thoughts were"
 - a. realized; identified
 - b. liked; admired
 - c. mixed up; confused
 - d. ignored; overlooked

8. "in every corner were **caskets** full of pearls and precious stones"
 - a. jars or jugs
 - b. sacks; bags
 - c. shelves or counters
 - d. chests or boxes