

ACT I SCENE 3

*The forest. Snow on the ground
and a cold chill in the air.
Winter birds twittering quietly.*

*The peace is broken by the sound
of childish laughter.*

(GRETEL runs on, holding a stick
from a tree branch.)

GRETEL

Throw it again Hansel, I bet I can hit it even further!

(HANSEL enters more slowly, he is
tired of the game. In his hand is a
rough cloth ball made of clothes
wrapped around each other.)

HANSEL

Alright, but just one more time.

(Hansel throws the ball and Gretel
whoops and exuberantly knocks it
back to him. She holds the stick up
in triumph.)

GRETEL

Steady on the approach, she shoots, she scores, it's an
unbelievable goal! Out of nowhere, off the left-hand side of
the stick..yet again Gretel has saved the match..who would
have thought someone so young could be so talented? ...come
on...one more..

HANSEL

We should get back now, before Mama notices we've gone.

GRETEL

Don't call her that!

HANSEL

Papa wants us to. Don't be in a mood Gretel. Come let's go
back.

GRETEL

She'll be out all afternoon.

HANSEL

But what if she comes back early? I've only chopped half the
wood and you still need to wash the rest of the clothes.

GRETEL

Boring!

HANSEL

I don't want to get into trouble.

GRETEL

We won't, we've got loads of time to get back. Besides, she won't tell us off in front of Papa - you know that.

HANSEL

I don't know why you hate her so much.

GRETEL

She doesn't belong here. Before *she* came we could do whatever we wanted. Now we have to do lots of chores and you have to chop all the firewood - you hate it, you know you do.

HANSEL

I think Papa's happier now. And if we help out he doesn't have to work so hard.

GRETEL

You're just taking her side because she showed you how to make paint out of vegetables.

HANSEL

I'm not taking her side! And you liked the pictures I did didn't you?

(Gretel picks up her stick and dribbles their ball around as Hansel draws in his book.)

GRETEL

Yes. But I don't like her! And I don't like this stupid forest. We're always working and we're always hungry and I'm sick of eating black bread and berries.

HANSEL

The bread isn't that bad.

GRETEL

I want to be rich and live in the city. You could come too! You could be a painter and I could have adventures! I heard that in the city you can do whatever you want and eat whatever you want and everyone has servants to do their work for them.

HANSEL

(Bursts out laughing)

Haha! Who told you that?! You'll just have to start wearing skirts and marry Fritz the Farmer. At least then you won't have to live with Stepmama.

GRETEL

I won't! I'm not marrying him - he smells like garlic sausage! And he looks like one too!

HANSEL

The forest is beautiful - we've got the sky and the sun and the trees....

(SONG)

HANSEL

(Sings)

In the forest,
Where the birds all sing,
In the forest,
We have everything...

GRETEL

(Sings)

But in the city
With servants doing my chores
No more bread and berries for tea
It's cake every day for me!

HANSEL

(Sings)

Every season the trees
Change a different hue,
And the sky up above
Has a thousand shades of blue.

GRETEL

(Speaking)

But there's nothing to do!

(Sings)

I've seen every sunrise,
And the sunset's boring too,
If I never see another tree,
It will be too soon!

HANSEL

(Speaking)

Gretel, you must learn to settle down.

(Sings)

I'll have to be a woodcutter,
And paint in my spare time,
You'll marry a local boy,

And live just fine.

HANSEL & GRETEL TEACH THE AUDIENCE THE SONG AND SPLIT THEM IN
HALF TO SING IT.

GRETEL

Well if I am stuck here, I don't have to be stuck here with
her! Telling me what to do - I'll show her!

HANSEL

What do you mean?

GRETEL

Nothing.

HANSEL

(Worried now)

What's nothing?

GRETEL

Nothing is nothing! Haha - do you remember when I put spiders
in her bed? Even Papa laughed at her screams!

HANSEL

What have you done now? You'll get us into trouble...
Gretel doesn't reply.

HANSEL

Tell me what you've done!

GRETEL

(Taking aim carefully with
the stick she whacks the
ball across the ground)

Just used her favourite blouse to make our ball.... Goal!!!

HANSEL

(Getting panicky)

You told me it was a rag! We've got to get back! If we go
now, maybe we'll get home before she does and we can clean
the stains out...

Gretel saunters over to the ball to
pick it up.

GRETEL

I don't want to go home yet.

She bends down to pick up the ball,
when suddenly she catches sight of
something.

GRETEL

Look! See how far we've come? We're right next to the dark forest!

HANSEL

The dark forest?

GRETEL

Why don't we go?

HANSEL

No-one's allowed in there. There's monsters and magic in the dark forest.

GRETEL

I'm not afraid of monsters, I'd beat them with my stick! Are you scared?

HANSEL

No. I just don't want to go.

Gretel starts inching towards the path.

HANSEL

Gretel, it's dangerous! Children disappear there,

GRETEL

Yes, this is the path - it's all dark and gnarly...

HANSEL

Gretel, no!

GRETEL

Ohhh....!

Gretel catches the scent of something and sniffs the air.

GRETEL

Do you smell that?

HANSEL

What?

GRETEL

I don't know, like cinnamon?... and sugar?... And CANDY!

Gretel leans even further forward, transfixed by the sugary smell.

Suddenly, The Bird appears on the

edge of the stage and squawks. The
children jump and the moment is
broken.

HANSEL

I don't smell anything. Let's go home. Come on Gretel, if we
leave now we'll get home before Step mama and Papa do, then
everything will be OK. Please?

GRETEL

Fine. Stupid bird.

Gretel sticks her tongue out at the
bird, then they both run off.