

HANSEL AND GRETEL

BY

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Shoebox Theatre  
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Dallas, Texas 75208  
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## CAST OF CHARACTERS

SELINA/MOTHER:	Overworked. Married for love, but frustrated through fatigue and hunger. Practical.
FRANZ/FATHER:	A dreamer and an artist. Optimistic. Gentle.
HANSEL:	Very brave. Practical and strong like his mother.
GRETEL:	Gentle and kind, like her father. Expressive.
WITCH:	Greedy and mean. Personifies Evil. Bad eyesight.
MAYOR/(WEALTHY PATRONESS):	Eloquent & charismatic. (Character can be played by female)
EVA & LANI:	Captives of the witch. Mrs. Hoffenberger's daughters.
MRS. HOFFENBERGER:	Octoberfest chairman. Outgoing.
TOWNSPEOPLE & CHILDREN:	Flower, balloon, candy, clothing vendors.

## NOTE FROM PLAYWRIGHT

The story of "Hansel and Gretel" was written near the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century through collaboration of the Brothers Grimm. One of the themes present in all of the Grimm's fairytales is that "virtue is always rewarded". Those of us who are familiar with the original text of this story know its "grim" story line and rather frightening implications. In today's often gruesome world, I find it unnecessary to underscore the horrid for family viewing. Because of this, I have purposely presented the story of a family with problems much like those our families face today. There is always the temptation to run from problems. Recognizing the love of those around us makes it easier to stay and resolve them.

## DEDICATION

To all parents and their children.

ACT I

SCENE I

SETTING:

Hamburg, Germany

AT RISE:

Lights up on the city of Hamburg.  
It is Oktoberfest. A meager one.  
Times are obviously hard. Still  
ALL are trying to be festive. WITCH  
makes cameo appearance during song.

SONG – THIS CITY, OUR TOWN/TOWNSPEOPLE, HANSEL &  
GRETEL

ALL

WELCOME TO EVERYONE TAKE A LOOK AROUND  
THIS A LOVELY PLACE TO VISIT THIS CITY, OUR TOWN  
THERE ARE NO STRANGERS HERE ALL ARE INVITED TO STAY  
FROM HILLSIDE AND COUNTRYSIDE SEASIDE AND NATIONWIDE  
COME SEE THE SIGHTS AND THE SOUNDS  
COME VISIT THIS CITY, OUR TOWN

(8 CTS)

ADULTS

I LOVE THE CITY LIFE SO MUCH TO BE FOUND  
THIS IS A LOVELY PLACE TO VISIT THIS CITY, OUR TOWN  
I KNOW NO STRANGERS HERE FAMILY, FRIENDS ALL AROUND

ALL

SO MUCH TO DO AND SEE SHOPPING AND HISTORY  
ON AN ADVENTURE WE'RE BOUND TO VISIT THIS CITY, OUR TOWN

(8 CTS) (Enter WITCH. CHILDREN follow her, making fun. Parents  
pull them back, embarrassed)

CHILDREN

ACHING BONES ALL ALONE WALKING UP AND DOWN

PARENTS

ALL PEOPLE WELCOME HERE  
THIS IS A SPECIAL PLACE

TO LIVE IN OUR CITY, OUR TOWN  
ALL ARE INVITED TO STAY

ALL

EVERYONE EVERYWHERE  
MUSIC AND LAUGHTER AND CLOWNS  
COME VISIT THIS CITY, OUR TOWN!

COMING TO SEE THE FAIR

(ALL start to go about their business. MAYOR calls the attention of the people. Enter SELINA as MAYOR begins speech)

MAYOR

Here now! Everyone gather round. Ahem! Welcome to Octoberfest. Welcome one and all! Is everyone having a good time?

ALL

(CROWD reactions, ad-lib comments and shouting)

Yes! Great fun! Bring on the pie-eating contestants! When does the music begin? Etc.

MAYOR

(Laughing)

Good! Good! I am glad to see such smiling faces.

(More seriously)

As you know, we are in the midst of hard times. The famine has hit many of us hard. We are forced to sacrifice, to work harder than ever before. Our children are sometimes hungry. I insisted we have this celebration so that we might bring a bit of joy back to their eyes. From the looks of the abundance here, I can see many of you share my vision. I thank you for it. I know it was not easy.

(Starts applause. ALL applaud each other)

## MAYOR (Cont'd)

I remind you it is in times such as these that we must band together, support one another. Let us put aside any differences we might have, forgive debts if we must, stand by our neighbors and friends to show our children there is strength in friendship and power in unity. Last of all, I call upon you to look inside your hearts. Find there the love that God gives us. Accept it and then share it with those who need it most. It is in giving that we receive. . . Now then, I think it is time for the pie-eating contest, is it not? Mrs. Hoffenberger, are we ready?

(MRS. HOFFENBERGER nods eagerly. ALL go toward her. General excitement. SELINA exits sadly, going home. Cross fade into. . .

## ACT I

## SCENE II

SETTING: The Cottage

AT RISE: SELINA enters house. FRANZ is sketching.

## SELINA

There you are, Franz. I was looking for the children in town but I couldn't find them. When they didn't come home on time, I thought they might have been distracted from their berry picking by the festival in town. If they are there, they are hiding from me.

## FRANZ

(Chuckles)

I think I, too, would hide from work. It is a day of celebration, Selina. They will be home soon enough.

## SELINA

How can you say that? I clearly instructed them to come straight home. You must make certain they are punished when they return, Franz. A good thrashing will refresh their memory!

FRANZ

I am not certain that is the way to make it clear. Perhaps if we explain. . .

SELINA

Explain?! How can we explain such problems as WE have? Oh, you don't understand either! But how could you? All you do is fuss over your paints instead of tending to our bills. We have had little harvest from our crops the past two years! And what do YOU do about it? You with your colors and silly notions of selling your drawings!

FRANZ

I only draw when there is no work to be done. Selina, you are over tired. Come, sit a moment and I will draw your picture. The sky is so blue today. It matches your eyes. . .

SELINA

No work to be done?!!!

(Enter HANSEL & GRETEL with buckets in hand. THEY stop abruptly as THEY hear the argument)

SELINA (Cont'd)

Our work is NEVER done. That simply proves what I say about you. Oh!! You are such a dreamer, Franz! Have you no sense of what might happen to us. . . your family . . . if we once again have no harvest?

(Opens cupboard)

Look! What do you see?

FRANZ

(Sadly)

Selina, you are angry. . .please stop these angry words!

SELINA

Of course I am angry! I have a right to be angry! And you have no right. . .

(HANSEL & GRETEL enter with wildflowers behind their back.  
THEY interrupt)

GRETEL

Mother! Father! We are home!

HANSEL

We have brought you a surprise!

SELINA

It had better be a bucket full of berries, or I shall thrash you for being late!

GRETEL

Better than that, Mother!

HANSEL

Yes, it is something to cheer you and Father. Close your eyes!

(FRANZ closes his eyes. SELINA twirls them around to see what is  
behind their back. SHE grabs the flowers and throws them on the  
floor)

SELINA

There is the place for your frivolity! And where are the berries? Did you not find any? Or  
were you too busy picking FLOWERS, while I spent my day washing  
your clothes and scraping together what morsels are left for our miserable dinner!

FRANZ

Selina, I think. . . .

SELINA

I don't care what you think! All you DO is think! You think about how to avoid your work  
! . . . a fine example you are to your children. No wonder they flit about picking flowers  
instead of doing their chores.

SELINA (Cont'd)

(To HANSEL & GRETEL)

Go to your room! There will be no dinner for you! Perhaps your empty stomachs will remind you just how poor we really are!

(HANSEL & GRETEL exit. FRANZ gently picks up flowers and puts them in a glass on the table. SELINA leans against door, burying her head, crying)

FRANZ

(Gently)

They were only trying to make the best of things.

SELINA

(Crying)

I know that!

(Softer, but still crying)

I know that, Franz. I couldn't stop myself.

(Sits at table. Touches the flowers)

You are right. I am tired. And weak from worry. But all I say is true. There is so little food that this is likely our last meal. I have scrimped and parceled until there is but a morsel left for tonight. In truth, it is best if they do not eat. For if they do, there will be nothing left! Oh Franz! I fear the worst. What will we do? If we can't eat, we will die!

(HANSEL & GRETEL are listening)

FRANZ

Have faith, Selina. There is hope. I feel that the crop this year might have a chance.

SELINA

Franz, you are the eternal optimist. Can you not see how desperate we truly are?

FRANZ

(Walks sadly from her)

This is my doing . . . it is all my fault. If I were more ambitious. If I had more talent in farming. . . .

SELINA

It is the famine, Franz. I was wrong to blame you.

FRANZ

No! If I knew more about the land. . . if I had only followed my own path instead of my Father's wishes. But that was so long ago. . .

SELINA

And we were so young. . . . we could not know . . . and then we had the children . . . .

FRANZ

Yes, the children.

SELINA

If we had only waited . . . for at least a little while.

FRANZ

Our lives would have been different.

(HANSEL & GRETEL exchange a glance)

FRANZ (Cont'd)

I wish I could have offered you more. . . Selina, if I only had one more chance.

SONG – ONE MORE CHANCE – FRANZ & SELINA

FRANZ

ONE MORE CHANCE      ONLY ONE MORE CHANCE  
FOR THE LIFE MY LOVELY WIFE ALWAYS WANTED

SELINA

ONE MORE CHANCE ONLY ONE MORE CHANCE  
TO RENEW OUR HOPES AND DREAMS

FRANZ

WE WERE YOUNG THEN

SELINA

SO HIGH-STRUNG THEN EVER DREAMING

FRANZ

EVER SCHEMING                      FULL OF PLANS

BOTH

ONE MORE DAY                      INVENTING ONE MORE DAY  
ONLY GIVE US ONE MORE CHANCE

SELINA

Oh Franz! There is no hope for us! I don't see a way. . .

FRANZ

It feels hopeless, I know, Selina. We cannot change what has been already done. We can only hope. . . and pray. I know we will be given

ONE MORE CHANCE

SELINA

THE THOUGHT OF ONE MORE CHANCE

BOTH

HEAR OUR PRAYER FOR ONE MORE DAY

(After song, special fades on SELINA & FRANZ as THEY fall asleep in each other's arms. Special up on HANSEL & GRETEL who have heard whole conversation)

GRETEL

Mama is so sad.

HANSEL

And Father, too.

GRETEL

(Sounding like her Mother)

Mama is right, Hansel. We will starve if we have no food!

HANSEL

We will not starve, Gretel.

(Has an idea)

We will NOT starve!

(Hands GRETEL a piece of paper and pencil)

Here, Gretel, write what I say. "Dear Father and Mother, We have gone to the city to make our fortune. We shall return. . . ."

GRETEL

What are you saying, Hansel? Where will we go? What do you mean?

HANSEL

We'll go into the next city to make our fortune. We are clever children and can do many things. When we have enough money, we'll return.

GRETEL

But to get to the next city, we must go through the forest. Father says the forest is dangerous. We are not to go into the forest alone!

HANSEL

We are not alone. We have each other. Stop worrying, Gretel and finish the note.

(Dictates)

"We shall return. . . next week. . . when we have enough money to support us all. Do not worry,

GRETEL

Not so fast! Not so fast, Hansel!

HANSEL

I am only trying to hurry because the night approaches quickly. I do not think that Mother and Father will awaken before dawn. . . still, one never knows.

GRETEL

Yes, but it is important to say the right things. They must not worry.

HANSEL

Write it then. . . "Do not worry. I shall protect our Gretel. . ."

GRETEL

You will?

HANSEL

Of course I will! Are you afraid to go?

GRETEL

I am not!

HANSEL

Good. Sign your name and I will write mine. (SHE writes)

Give me the pen. (HE writes)

Leave it here. I will wait outside for you.

(HANSEL gets his backpack and goes outside. GRETEL leaves the note on the table. SHE looks lovingly at her sleeping parents. Joins HANSEL outside)

HANSEL

Are you ready for an adventure?

GRETEL

I am. Oh Hansel, are you afraid? Even just a little bit?

HANSEL

Of course not! See here. I have brought loaf of bread to leave crumbs along the way, so we can find our way back. Come now, Gretel. Of what is there to be afraid?

SONG – ADVENTURES BIG AND SMALL/HANSEL & GRETEL

HANSEL

THE MORE I TRAVEL THROUGH THIS LIFE  
THE MORE I GET TO SEE  
ROLLING RIVERS GREENER PASTURES  
NOW I'M OFF TO BE THE MASTER  
OF MY FATE I MUST ADMIT  
IT'S NO LUCK AT ALL  
IF YOU SEE ME IN THE CITY  
LAUGHING JOKING BEING WITTY  
COME ALONG AND JOIN ME ON  
AD--VENTURES BIG AND SMALL

GRETEL

I AM YOUNGER NOT AS TRAVELED  
I CAN ONLY DREAM  
LOLLIPOPS IN CANDY SHOPS ARE  
WHAT'S IN STORE I HOPE THERE'S MORE  
I'LL FOLLOW YOU WHERE 'ERE YOU GO  
HEAR THE CITY CALL  
GRETEL! YOU CAN SEE SUCH SIGHTS  
THE SPARKLE OF THE CITY LIGHTS  
I'LL COME ALONG AND JOIN YOU ON  
AD--VENTURES BIG AND SMALL!

DANCE – 36 CTS

BOTH

ADVENTURES BIG AND SMALL!

BLACKOUT