

# **HANSEL AND GRETEL**

**A ONE ACT PLAY FOR CHILDREN**

**LYRICS BY MALCOLM BROWN**

**SCRIPT AND SCORE BY**

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## Dramatis Personae

Father

Mother

Hansel

Gretel

Witch

Villager 1

Villager 2

Chorus of Villagers

The Good Elf

Elf 1

Elf 2

Elf 3

Elf 4

A Group of Crows

Chorus of Animals

## Scene 1, In the Village

### PROCESSIONAL MUSIC

*The villagers process in to the music, carrying a maypole. It is a festival day and they are dressed in their finest clothes. Underneath these, however, the villagers are dressed in rags. The harvest has been poor, life in the village is tough and there is not enough food to go around. The people are miserable and starving. The maypole is held up by two children centre-stage and the village children dance around it during the song. After the song the maypole is taken up-stage.*

### SONG 1      **Join Together, Dance and Sing**

Chorus:

Join together, dance and sing,  
On this happy festal day.  
All our troubles leave far behind,  
Joy and laughter drive them all away.

Verse 1:

Life in the village is so hard,  
Many a tear is shed.  
We need to work from dawn till dusk,  
To earn our daily bread.

Chorus

Verse 2:

Not many sounds of joy are heard,  
But for the girls and boys.  
They run and skip and play their games  
With sticks and stones for toys.

Chorus

Verse 3:

Around some corner there must be  
A better life than this.  
Where we would know for evermore  
True happiness and bliss.

Chorus

VILLAGER 1 It's no good, I can't keep up this pretence.

VILLAGER 2 What on earth do you mean?

VILL 1 Pretending we are happy and that life in the village is normal. I'm starving, and look, my clothes are in tatters!

VILL 2 Why don't you get your wife to stitch them up?

VILL 1 She's sewn them so many times that there's none of the original fabric left. She's repairing the previous repairs.

VILL 2 We must take an example from the children and look on the bright side.

VILL 1 Well, what is the bright side?

VILL 2 I'll let you know when I've thought of it. *(He exits.)*  
*(Enter Hansel and Gretel's father.)*

VILL 1 Ah, Anton, have you come to drown your sorrows with a mug of ale?

FATHER I would if there were any. That turnip brew really does not taste like the real thing – and it gives me a belly ache.

VILL 1 It can't be as bad as the ache I get from an empty stomach. It's so noisy it wakes up the whole family in the night.

FATHER Where is my wife? I have something to discuss with her.

MOTHER *(Off-stage)* Anty-Wanty dear! Anty-Wanty where are you? It's dinner time.

FATHER Oh no, she's doing that Anty-Wanty thing again. That means bad news. Here I am, Beatrice! What is it, my darling?  
*(Enter mother.)*

MOTHER Oh there you are, Anton.

FATHER Beatrice, I have some bad news for you.

MOTHER Can things get any worse than they already are?

FATHER I have spent the day wandering the town looking for work.

MOTHER And?

FATHER There are no jobs to be found.

MOTHER But what shall we do? We are so poor.

FATHER I have had an idea. We must send the children into the forest to live. They can search for roots, nuts and berries. We simply cannot afford to feed them anymore.

MOTHER I suppose then we could eat every day, instead of taking turns. But....

FATHER That's settled then. We'll do it tomorrow.

MOTHER But ... but....

*(Enter Hansel and Gretel.)*

HANSEL     Mother, father, did you call us for dinner?  
MOTHER     No, it's not your turn today.  
GRETEL     But mother, we are starving.  
FATHER     There is not enough to go around, Gretel my dear.  
HANSEL     But we thought you would find work in the town, father.  
FATHER     There is no work.  
MOTHER     Children, we have no choice but to send you into the forest to fend for yourselves.  
GRETEL     But mother, there are wolves there.  
HANSEL     And evil spirits.  
FATHER     We're sorry children, but our minds are made up. You must leave at once.  
MOTHER     Here is a basket with the last of the bread for the journey.  
FATHER     Farewell children! *(He gives them a quick hug and exits.)*  
MOTHER     ..... *(She goes to speak but is too upset for words. She hugs them and then runs off weeping. The children cross downstage.)*  
HANSEL     Well, there's a fine thing! Our own parents have thrown us out.  
GRETEL     *(Weeping)* How could they?  
HANSEL     Don't worry, Gretel, I have a plan. Instead of eating the bread we will break it into small pieces and leave a trail through the forest. Then we will be able to find our way home.  
GRETEL     It's a good idea – but I don't think we will be welcome at home.  
HANSEL     Perhaps if we find plenty of food we can sell some and become rich.  
GRETEL     Come on then, we must find shelter in the forest before it gets dark.  
*(They exit.)*

*End of Scene*

## Scene 2, In the Forest

*When the lights go up a flock of crows are moving around the stage, pecking up breadcrumbs. As they exit, enter Hansel and Gretel with a basket full of nuts and berries.*

GRETEL Do you think we have enough yet, Hansel? The basket is nearly full.

HANSEL Then it's time to return home. The wolves will soon be stalking the forest.

*(A wolf howls somewhere nearby.)*

GRETEL I'm frightened, Hansel. It's beginning to get dark.

HANSEL Let's follow the trail home.

*(He looks for the crumbs.)*

That's strange. I can't see any of the crumbs we dropped.

GRETEL What about over here? *(She searches.)* Oh no, I can't find any either. How can this be?

HANSEL There is only one explanation; they must have been eaten by the birds.

GRETEL Oh, those horrid creatures! Now we are lost. We'll never find the way home again.

*(She sits down heavily and Hansel sits beside her. The lights begin to dim.)*

HANSEL You must not blame the birds, Gretel. They are as hungry as we are - and they weren't to know we depended on the crumbs.

GRETEL No, I suppose not.

*(The wolf howls again.)*

Hansel, do you think the wolves are very hungry as well?

HANSEL I expect so, Gretel.

GRETEL What do wolves eat?

HANSEL Well, I...I...I expect they eat nuts and berries just like us. Come closer to me Gretel. The nights are cold in the forest. We will need to keep each other warm. *(She snuggles up to him.)*

GRETEL Hansel?

HANSEL Yes, Gretel.

GRETEL Do you believe in goblins?

HANSEL I'm not sure, Gretel. I've never actually seen one.

GRETEL I hope there are none in this forest. It would be simply awful if one came along now.

HANSEL I think we need to get some sleep and in the morning we can try to find our way home.

GRETEL I'm very sleepy. Will you tell me a story, Hansel?

HANSEL Of course. Once upon a time there was a little girl called Red Riding Hood. She lived in a palace with her wicked stepmother, the queen.  
*(Gretel's head lolls and she snores gently.)*  
One day the queen looked in her mirror and said mirror, mirror on the wall – who shall take me to ... the .... Ball? .....

*(He falls asleep.)*

**DANCE      The Crows' Dance**  
*(During the dance the crows drop leaves onto the sleeping children to keep them warm and the chorus of forest animals gradually enter and watch. After the dance the crows fly off.)*

**SONG 2      Such Young and Innocent Children      Animals**

Verse 1:  
It is so strange to see these poor children  
Lying so helpless with no-one to care.  
How could it be that someone could leave them?  
Dangers are lurking everywhere.

Chorus:  
Is there some way that we can help them,  
Lead them far away from here?  
Find some place where they can be happy,  
Warm and safe from all danger and fear?

Verse 2:  
They are such young and innocent children;  
They have no knowledge of evil or good.  
They must be hungry, soon they'll be starving.  
How did they come to be lost in this wood?

Verse 3:  
In this dark wood the dangers are many;  
Strange shapes and shadows are watching us here.  
Eyes in the blackness follow our movements;  
But try to catch them, they disappear.

*End of Scene*