

Hansel or Gretel

NICK TICKLE, FAIRY TALE DETECTIVE

(A clearing in the woods. There is a large story book sitting on a stump. Hidden in the stump is some glitter or confetti. Enter Old Granny Possum. She crosses to the stump, picks up the book and sits down.)

GRANNY. Hello, children, hello. My name is Old Granny Possum and I'm here to tell you all some wonderful fairy stories. Are you ready? Then, let's begin. *(She opens the book and begins to read.)* Once upon a time, there were two children who lived in the forest. *(Enter Hansel and Gretel)*

HANSEL. I'm Hansel.

GRETTEL. And I'm Gretel. *(They bow and curtsy.)*

GRANNY. They lived with their father, who was a woodcutter. *(Father enters.)* He worked alone out in the woods most of the time... *(Still entering, Father makes a u-turn and exits.)* ... so the children didn't see him very much. Although they were very poor and their mother was very dead, they were very happy. *(Hansel and Gretel join hands and skip in a circle, singing a little tune.)* They were so happy that had there been other people living nearby, they would have made them sick to death with their incessant cheerfulness. Nothing, I mean nothing, got these kids down.

GRETTEL. I don't mind that we're poor.

HANSEL. I don't mind that Mother is in heaven with the angels. We have father, sometimes, and each other.

GRETTEL. What more could we ask for?

GRANNY. See what I mean? Makes you nauseous, doesn't it. Well, anyway, one day, their father went into town and came back with a new stepmother for the children.

(Enter Father again, and Felicity, the stepmother. Unlike most stepmothers, she looks fairly normal and not evil at all.) Then, he went back to chopping wood, leaving the children to get acquainted with his new wife. *(Still entering, Father makes a u-turn and exits.)*

FELICITY. Hello, children. My name's Felicity and I'll understand if you don't love me right... *(Hansel and Gretel throw their arms Felicity.)*

HANSEL AND GRETTEL. Oh, stepmummy, we do love you!

FELICITY. Well, that was easier than I thought it would be.

GRANNY. Their father stayed out in the forest a long time but the children didn't miss him at all. They couldn't get enough of their new mother and spent all of their time with her.

FELICITY. Children, you've been cooped up with me in this house all day long. Wouldn't you like to go out and play in the sunshine and fresh air for a while? *(A bit desperate.)* Please?

HANSEL AND GRETTEL. Oh, no, mother, we want to stay here with you!

FELICITY. I was afraid you'd say that. I guess I'll do the dishes.

HANSEL. Oh, mother, let me help you.

FELICITY. Maybe I'll go out and fetch some water first. You kids stay here...

GRETTEL. Wait, mother, I'll come and help.

HANSEL. No, me, I'm going to help her!

GRETTEL. I thought you were going to do the dishes!

HANSEL. I can do both! *(Hansel and Gretel get into a little shoving match over who's going to help do what.)*

FELICITY. *(Wearily, to Granny.)* They're driving me nuts.

GRANNY. So I see.

FELICITY. Any advice?

GRANNY. Why not play...

FELICITY. Dead and hope that they'll get bored and wander away?

GRANNY. I meant play a game...

FELICITY. Of Hide and Seek and they hide only I don't seek?

GRANNY. Why not take them on a picnic and...

FELICITY. Leave them alone in the forest to find their own way home again? Perfect! Maybe they won't get back for hours. Or maybe they won't get back at all! Wonderful! Children! What do you say we pack a lunch and go on a picnic?

HANSEL. I'm going to carry the basket.

GRETTEL. No, me, I'm going to carry the basket!

HANSEL. I called it first!

GRETTEL. But I'm better at basket-carrying than you are!

HANSEL. Are not!

GRETTEL. Are too!

HANSEL. Not!

GRETTEL. Too!

FELICITY. *(With a sigh.)* We'll take two baskets. *(Felicity goes off and returns with two small wicker baskets.)*

HANSEL. And I'll carry them both! *(Hansel tries to take both but Granny stops him with her next words.)*

GRANNY. And so Gretel took one and Hansel took the other and they got ready to go on a picnic deep in the woods. Hansel was afraid that they might have trouble finding their way back again so he decided to leave a trail of bread crumbs as they walked so they wouldn't get lost.

HANSEL. Mother, I'm going to take these bread crumbs and... *(Hansel reaches into his pocket but there are no bread crumbs.)*

HANSEL. That's odd. There's usually bread crumbs in there.

GRANNY. And so they started out into the deep, dark forest.

HANSEL. (*To Gretel*) Have you got my bread crumbs?

GRETTEL. No. Why would I have your stupid old bread crumbs?

GRANNY. They wanted to find the perfect place to have their picnic.

HANSEL. (*To Granny*) Wait a minute. I can't seem to find my bread crumbs...

GRETTEL. I can't believe you don't have your bread crumbs. They're only, like, the most important thing in the whole story and you've lost 'em? Jeez, you only have to do one stupid thing and you can't even do that right. What a butthead.

HANSEL. Listen, cooie-girl...

GRANNY. (*Blissfully unaware of the problem.*) They walked and walked, deeper and deeper...

HANSEL. (*To Granny*) Can you hold on a minute, please, I'm having a little problem here...

GRETTEL. (*To Felicity*) Don't you like me better?

GRANNY. They got further and further away from their house...

GRETTEL. (*To Felicity*) I'm so much smarter than he is and I'm cuter, too, don't you think?

HANSEL. (*To Granny, perhaps tapping her on the shoulder to get her attention.*) Excuse me. Have you seen my bread crumbs?

GRANNY. No, I'm sorry, I haven't.

HANSEL. Well, we can't do anything else until I find my bread crumbs! They're very important.

GRETTEL. Can't you do anything right? (*To Felicity*) Why don't we leave him alone to get lost in the forest and

then you and I can live happily ever after?

HANSEL. In all the zillions of times we've done this story, this is the first time I've ever not had the bread crumbs, so why don't you just shut up, dog-breath?

GRETTEL. Why don't you shut up, cat-poop breath? (*Hansel and Gretel get into a little tiff again.*)

FELICITY. Why don't I go look for them... over there? (*Felicity takes the opportunity of Hansel and Gretel being distracted to exit.*)

GRANNY. Can't you just pretend to have some bread crumbs?

HANSEL. No, because the birds have to come and eat them up and I can't very well ask them to eat pretend bread crumbs because then they'd get mad and peck my eyes out or something.

GRETTEL. Oh, way to scare all the little kids in the audience, monkey-boy.

GRANNY. (*To audience.*) Does anyone out there have any bread crumbs we could borrow?

HANSEL. (*To audience.*) I'm sorry, this is the first time I've ever had a problem like this. Usually we just go on the picnic and I leave a trail of bread crumbs and everything goes along just fine.

GRETTEL. Yeah, but not this time. You really screwed up this time, didn't you, you idiot?

GRANNY. What about some white stones?

HANSEL. The birds are not going to eat stones. I'm sorry, but we can't go any further until I find some bread crumbs. (*Hansel exits.*)

GRETTEL. What a loser. (*Gretel exits.*)

GRANNY. Well, That's a disturbing development. I guess we'll just have to have another story. (*She turns to a new section of the book.*) Oh, here's one of my favorites. Jack and the Beanstalk. Do you know this one? It's very