

# Scene 1

*(As **intro music** plays (CD track 10) the cast enters. The lights come up on a small staged area to one side of the main stage, revealing a bare and shabby kitchen – see staging suggestions/scenery. Hansel, Gretel and their father sit at a table, while their stepmother stands at the sink, arms folded and in a bad mood! She wears a tatty fur coat.)*

**Narrator** *(reading from an old book)* In a tiny cottage, outside the city walls, on the edge of a large forest, lived a poor family. Although they owned few possessions and had very little to eat, they were good, honest folk, each and every one. Actually, that's not strictly true! The father, his son Hansel and his daughter Gretel were good, honest folk, but as for his wife, the children's stepmother.....

**Stepmother** *(to father)* You useless lump! What do you mean you can't afford to buy me a new fur coat? Look at this old thing – I'm embarrassed to wear it in public! My mother warned me you weren't husband material! And to think I could have married Herbert Goldsworthy. His new wife can hardly walk under the weight of all her jewellery. But no, I have to take pity on you and your two brats, fool that I am, and sacrifice my own happiness to cook and clean in this hovel!

**Gretel** But you never do any cooking or cleaning! You make us do it all!

**Stepmother** You watch your lip, or I'll wash your mouth out with the dish cloth!

**Hansel** *(aside to Gretel)* Don't worry Gretel, she doesn't even know where the dish cloth is kept!

**Father** My love, I carry my axe for miles every day looking for work on the farms, but no-one is hiring. What can I do? How can I buy you a new fur coat when we don't even have enough money for food?

**Gretel** Father tries his best, Mother. And Hansel and I spend long hours, when we should be at school, searching the hedgerows for berries and roots.

**Hansel** While you just sit with your feet up eating the little food we have left.

**Stepmother** How dare you! You know I suffer with my back. The doctor has given me strict instructions not to overdo it.

**Father** Hansel! Don't be disrespectful. Your mother is right, I've let you down. Unless our luck changes we may starve! Oh what will become of us?

## Song **A Sorry Situation** *(CD track 1 & 11, lyrics p19)*

*(Family supported by whole cast)*

*(As the last bars of the song fade, the lights dim and Hansel and Gretel exit. Their father and stepmother sit and begin a heated discussion)*

- Narrator** As night fell on the poor family, Hansel and Gretel took a threadbare blanket each and went to bed in the next room. But being so cold and hungry they could not sleep. Instead, they lay awake, huddled together, listening in horror as their stepmother revealed to their father a wicked and dastardly plan!
- Father** But my love, surely there's another way!
- Stepmother** Just use your loaf, you oaf! Too many mouths to feed and not enough food! What else do you suggest?
- Father** But to take them deep into the forest and just.....just....abandon them? They'll never survive!
- Stepmother** *(aside)* Of course! That's the idea!
- Father** What was that, my love?
- Stepmother** Err....I said 'Of course they'll survive, my dear!' They're clever children. They'll find food and shelter and then, when we're back on our feet again, we'll go and find them and bring them home. *(aside)* That's if they've not been eaten by wolves and bears!
- Father** What was that, my love?
- Stepmother** Err....I said 'It's time we went upstairs!' You know, get some sleep for the long day ahead. Don't worry. Everything is going to be fine. Just trust me!

## **Song What A Wicked Woman** *(CD track 2 & 12, lyrics p20)*

*(Stepmother supported by whole cast)*

*(As the last bars of the song fade, the two exit and the lights come down.)*

## **Scene 2**

*(The lights come up to signify a new day. Hansel, Gretel, their father and stepmother enter. They gather round the table.)*

- Narrator** The next day the family gathered round the table. Hansel and Gretel were given a crust of bread wrapped in a napkin and told by their stepmother that they were all heading into the forest for the day, to find wild mushrooms for their dinner. Unaware that the children knew of their plan to leave them in the forest, the two grown-ups set off at a brisk pace.

*(The lights come up on the main stage, revealing a forest scene. The father and stepmother cross over from the 'kitchen stage'. Hansel and Gretel hang back.)*

**Hansel** Listen Gretel, as we make our way through the forest, we'll drop crumbs from the slices of bread she's given us. When our loving parents abandon us we can simply follow the trail of breadcrumbs back home!

**Stepmother** Will you two brats stop dawdling and hurry up!

*(Hansel and Gretel cross over, dropping crumbs as they go. The family gathers centre stage. The stepmother then nudges the father, urging him to speak.)*

**Father** Err...right children. I'd....err....like you to...wait here and....err... make a fire. Your mother and I....err....will go and....err... go and....Oh! I can't do this!

**Stepmother** Oh, for pity's sake! Where's your backbone? Children, your father and I will go and collect the mushrooms. We don't want you to get lost so you stay here and make a fire. *(to father)* Come on you gutless wonder! *(to the audience)* At last, I can almost feel that fur coat around my shoulders. Ha ha!

*(As sinister music plays (CD track 13) the stepmother drags the father away.)*

**Narrator** Hansel and Gretel watched their wicked stepmother lead their dear but weak father off through the trees and out of sight. Although they felt frightened and alone they found comfort in knowing they could still find their way home by following the trail of breadcrumbs. But first, exhausted from the walk and from being awake most of the night before, they lay down and fell asleep.

*(They lie down. As bird music plays (CD track 14) a group of assorted birds enters – see production suggestions/costumes. They agitatedly look at the ground.)*

**Bird 1** *(padded to look quite stout)* Dear oh dear! It's slim pickings these days. There'll soon be nothing left of me!

**Bird 2** Nonsense! *(patting Bird 1's paunch)* You're hardly wasting away! The same can't be said for the rest of us though.

**Bird 3** It's tough! I've not seen a worm in ages! You'd think they'd give us a fighting chance and pop their heads up once in a while. *(stamping on the ground)* Come on you wriggly critters! I know you're down there! Show yourselves!

**Bird 4** Have you noticed, a lot fewer humans are leaving tasty titbits on their bird tables these days. Once, you could always guarantee a magnificent spread of stale crusts, pastry and even a crumb or two of cake, but not anymore.

**Bird 5** Well I blame you for that. I warned you it was a bad idea doing your 'target practice' on people's clean windows. No wonder they're not feeding us.

**Bird 4** But I thought humans enjoyed our singing in their gardens. You'd think they'd overlook the odd splat on their windows considering the performances we put on for them.

**Bird 6** Well without their help, our only option at the minute is ambushing squirrels, and they seem a bit thin on the ground these days too! Best face facts, guys, our days could be numbered!

## **Song Those Good Old Days** *(CD track 3 & 15, lyrics p21)*

*(Birds supported by whole cast)*

**Bird 1** *(looking at the ground)* Hang on a minute....what's this? Hey, you lot, I think we've struck gold!

*(The birds all look at the ground, then bend down for a peck. They stand back up, and shout together.....)*

**All Birds** Bingo! Breadcrumps!

**Bird 2** Well, what are we waiting for? Come on guys, Christmas has come early! Let's get stuck in!

*(As bird music plays (CD track 16) the birds exit, pecking the ground)*

**Narrator** Hansel and Gretel awoke from their slumber, not knowing that their only hope of finding their way back home had been...well...eaten!

**Hansel** Come on Gretel. Let's go home and give our parents a lovely surprise!

**Gretel** *(looking at the ground)* But Hansel, where are the breadcrumbs?

**Narrator** The two children frantically scoured the ground for the trail they'd left, but not a single breadcrumb was to be found. With no idea of which direction to go in, they stumbled deeper into the forest!

*(As sinister music plays (CD track 17), the lights dim and Hansel and Gretel exit.)*

.....**continued**.....