

Ever After

By

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They finally saw their father's house. Hansel and Gretel ran inside and threw their arms around their father. The woodcutter hugged them tightly, wishing he had never left them alone in the woods. He told them of their stepmother's death and the children jumped with excitement for they had good news too. Gretel ran around shaking her apron making pearls and precious stones fall to the floor. Plump Hansel threw handfuls from his pockets. Now all their cares were at an end.

The next morning, the father and the children went to the market. They brought back all sorts of delicacies. The father spent all day preparing a feast and when it was time for supper, Hansel could not bring himself to eat what was on his plate. The father did not understand why, for the meal smelled scrumptious. Hansel believed it was from all the excitement of being home. Gretel advised not to push him to eat and the father did not mind since Hansel was much larger than the last time he saw him. The father and Gretel continued with their meal and afterwards they all went to sleep.

The next day, it was the same. The father prepared savory meals and only Gretel ate them. Hansel felt no hunger and spent most of his day outside playing with pebbles.

After a week, Hansel had lost weight and the father was worried. No matter what food was brought before him, Hansel did not eat it. Even Gretel was getting worried.

A day later, the father brought the local doctor and after examining Hansel, said that all was well. Some weight loss was to be expected especially after what Hansel had been through. The father and Gretel were relieved and hoped that Hansel would get better.

Weeks passed and Hansel grew thinner and thinner. His skin was tight around his bones and his face looked skeletal as if all life was sucked out of it. He spent his days outside gathering pebbles into his jacket and walking around the yard. He only stopped to look back at the house, dropping a pebble onto an invisible path.

The father had brought the doctor again, then another one from another town, and then yet another from a remote region. They all found nothing and said that Hansel should be eating any day now.

The next morning, the father woke up to the smell of cooking. He rushed in to see a table full with milk, pancakes with sugar, apples, and nuts. There were bricks made of old bread, moldy cake roofing, and broken windowpanes of sugar. He looked at Gretel who wore a burnt dress and had ashes on her face, making her look old like a witch.

Gretel comforted her father and said, “Don’t cry, father. It was the only way.”

The father looked down at the black scratches along the floor that led to a corner where a skeleton of a boy sat devouring bread behind a cage.

Base Source: Hansel and Gretel by the Brothers Grimm [Final Edition, 1857 - <http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/grimm015a.html>]