

# *The New Hansel & Gretel*

Adapted from the Brothers Grimm fairy tale by Nancy Podewils

*Actors carry trunk onstage, set up house and candy/gingerbread house, go offstage.*

**Narrator:** Good afternoon/evening. My name is Kassi, and I am the Narrator, which means I get to introduce the characters and to tell you the story of “The New Hansel & Gretel”.

First, there are our main characters, Hansel & Gretel. (*Hannah & Gretel come on stage*)

**Hannah:** Whoa, whoa, whoa. Do I look like a “Hansel”? “Hansel” is a stupid boy’s name. (*to audience*) My parents picked the name because they were expecting a boy. As you can see I’m a girl. I didn’t mind when I was little, but now it’s not cool. (*to narrator*) The name is “Hannah”. OK?

**Narrator:** OK. Sorry. Hannah & Gretel. (*Hannah & Gretel open the trunk and take out their costume pieces, which they put on.*)

**Gretel:** And I need to find a better name than “Gretel”, or at least a nickname, because “Gretel” sounds so lame, now that I’m almost twelve & three-quarters. (*To audience*) What do you think? Maybe “Ellie”? “Rachel”? I really need your help. I kinda like “Rachel”—what do you think? OK, for this story I’m going to be Rachel. (*Hannah & Gretel go off stage.*)

**Narrator:** Then we have their father, who doesn’t have a name in the old “Hansel & Gretel” story, but we’ll call him ‘John.’ (*Father comes out, puts on jacket.*) John’s first wife—Hansel & Gretel’s...

**Hannah & Gretel** (*popping heads in, interrupting*): Hannah & Rachel! (*They go off.*)

**Narrator:** ...Hannah’s & Rachel’s mother—died several years ago. After trying to raise Hannah & Rachel on his own, John married Jane. (*Stepmother comes out, puts on apron.*)

**John** (*to audience*): I know they still missed their real mother, but I couldn’t work and take care of them and the house, too. Hannah tried to fill in, but it wasn’t fair to her to have so much responsibility. Then I met Jane, who was caring and helpful, and I thought “she’s just what our family needs.”(*John and Jane smile at each other, go off stage.*)

**Narrator:** The last main character is Medea. (*Medea comes on stage, opens trunk, takes out shawl & puts it over her head, makes “witchy” face.*) She just moved into the neighborhood and built a gingerbread house covered with frosting & candy,

**Medea:** I love this neighborhood—it’s filled with children—and I love children!

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*(cackles)* No child who comes near my candy house can resist tasting it, and then...*(cackles, slides shawl from head onto shoulders, smiles sweetly, takes on demeanor of a pleasant woman, goes off stage)*

**Narrator:** Since no one in the neighborhood had ever had a gingerbread & candy house, people wondered who she was and why she had such an unusual house.

**Jane** *(popping head around corner of house):* There's something weird about her—I don't trust her. *(Jane goes back inside.)*

**Narrator:** Then there are two of Hannah's and Rachel's friends from school, Whitney & Soren. *(They come out, get books/ backpack/ cell phone/ I-pod out of trunk, go off stage.)*

So now for our story....Once upon a time—that's the way most fairytales begin—there was a poor woodcutter named John, his teenage children, Hansel..

**Hannah** *(head around corner):* "Hannah," remember? *(pulls head back)*

**Narrator:** Hannah and Gretel..

**Gretel** *(popping head in):* "Rachel" (or whatever name was chosen), Hel-lo! *(goes off)*

**Narrator:** and their new stepmother, Jane. John was having trouble finding work as a woodcutter, so he did odd jobs whenever he could and was often gone from early morning until late at night. Jane had also gone to work, but money was still tight. They had to grow their own fruits and vegetables and to raise chickens, so they would have food to eat.

**Gretel** *(entering):* I'm so hungry. There's never enough food to eat around here.

**Hannah** *(entering):* And we never get dessert anymore. Before Jane came, at least Dad would get us good stuff from McDonald's & Jack in the Box, and we'd have chips and soda after school.

**Gretel:** That was so much better than chicken and vegetables everyday. Bo-ring! *(Jane enters as Hannah is saying this.)*

**Jane:** I think we're all lucky to have fresh, healthy food instead of junk. All that fat and sugar and salt you used to eat—expensive and fattening! No wonder your faces were breaking out and you weren't doing well in school.

**Gretel:** Well, I can't do well in school if I'm starving, can I?

**Hannah:** This "healthy" food tastes gross, too. *(To Jane):* I think you're trying to make

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us suffer, because we're not your real kids. I miss Mom (*sighs*)..

**Gretel:** I miss Mom, too (*looks off*).

**Hannah:** We could talk with her about anything, and when we didn't know what to do, she always helped us figure it out. Remember?

**Gretel:** Yeah. And Mom was fun. She let us do whatever we wanted. (*To Jane*): You make us come home right after school and do homework. We almost never get to be with our friends.

**Hannah:** When it was just us and Dad, at least we...

**Jane** (*interrupting*): Look, I'm not trying to take your Mom's place, but I think you should go to your rooms until you can show some respect for your father and me. We are working very hard to try to give you the things you need.

**Gretel** (*interrupting*): But I need more food—and food that tastes good! Vegetables do not taste good!

**Narrator:** Just a minute. (*Hannah, Gretel & Jane freeze. Narrator turns to audience*): Do you think that's true? How many of you eat vegetables because they're healthy? Raise your hands. OK, now how many of you think some vegetables also taste good? (*Show of hands. Asks three people with hands up*): What's your favorite vegetable? What do you like? How about you? Thank you—now back to our story...(*Hannah, Gretel and Jane un-freeze.*)

**Gretel:** And I need sweets and some fun!

**Jane** (*seething*): I'm not going to fight with you. Go to your rooms now and do your homework. (*Hannah and Rachel make faces and start to protest.*) And, for talking back to me, you're both grounded. No leaving the house for a week, except to go to school. (*Jane exits.*)

**Gretel:** So now what are we going to do? I'll die if I can't see my friends.

**Hannah:** Let me think—I'll think of something. (*pause*) What if we say we have to work on a project with one of our friends, so we have to go to their house?

**Gretel:** Jane would probably call to check, or she'd make us do the project here.

**Hannah:** Yeah, she probably would. (*pause*) I've got it! Since Jane is at work when school gets out, we could take turns coming home on time—and when she calls, the one at home could answer for both of us.

**Gretel:** What if I'm home and she asks for you?

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**Hannah:** You could make up an excuse—tell her I’m in the bathroom, or I’m taking a nap, or working on my homework and don’t want to be disturbed.

**Gretel:** OK. But who gets to be with friends first?

**Hannah:** We’ll do Rock-Paper-Scissors.

**Gretel:** OK: two out of three wins. (*They do, Hannah wins, smirks.*)  
(*a little sad*) So tomorrow I come home while you’re with your friends,  
(*brightening*) and the next day I get to be with my friends—right?

**Hannah:** Right. And we’ll tell each other what excuses we’ve told Jane, so we don’t use the same excuse twice. (*They give each other high-fives & exit.*)

**Narrator:** When John came home, Jane told him about grounding the girls. (*Jane & John enter.*)

**Jane:** I didn’t know what else to do. They don’t seem to understand that we just can’t afford to be going out to eat or buying treats. And I think they blame me for taking their mother’s place.

**John:** Let me talk to Hannah. Maybe I can make her understand our financial situation, so she can help Rachel be more realistic. (*Calling out*): Hannah, can you come here a minute?

**Hannah:** What’s up, Dad?

**John:** I didn’t want to tell you—and I don’t want to worry Rachel—but I need you to understand something: I got laid off last week, and I haven’t been able to find another job, so we just can’t afford to buy food the way we used to. You were so great about helping me after your mom died. Jane’s trying her best, and I’d really appreciate it if you’d cool the complaining.

**Hannah:** I’m sorry about your job, Dad. I’ll talk with Rachel about the complaining. We’ll try not to make problems for you. (*John smiles; all exit.*)

**Narrator:** So for the whole next week, Hannah and Rachel took turns being with their friends, while the other came home to answer the phone when Jane or their Dad called.

*Hannah & Gretel enter, talking, accompanied by Friend #, Whitney.*

**Hannah** (*to Gretel*): You know what? Whitney and I passed Medea’s house yesterday on our way home, and it’s even better up close.

**Whitney:** Yeah, you can smell the chocolate from half-way down the street! And I

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heard that the inside of her house is amazing!

**Hannah:** I heard she has a huge flat-screen TV!

**Gretel:** And I bet she has a game room with a Wii!

**Whitney:** Rachel, you love sweets and fun; I think you should check it out. I sure wouldn't mind sampling those chocolate shutters!

**Gretel** (*dubious*): By "check it out", do you mean break in (*Whitney shrugs*), or taste the shutters? (*Whitney nods.*) They sound delicious, but do you think it's OK to eat her house?

**Hannah:** If we only take a taste, she probably wouldn't even notice.

**Gretel:** But how are we going to go there without Jane finding out?

**Whitney:** You could make up some excuse to come home late—it would be easy.

**Hannah:** Let's tell her we need to go to the library after school because we have research to do for our school projects.

**Whitney:** My mom always falls for that one.

**Gretel:** Maybe Jane will say yes, since we've been good all week.

**Hannah:** It's worth a try. Just figure out what "project" you're working on.

**Gretel:** OK.

**Whitney:** I gotta go. Good luck! (*exits*)

**Hannah** (*calling to Jane*): Jane, can we talk with you?

**Jane** (*entering*): Sure, Han-nah.. (*She was going to say "Hansel" but catches herself.*)  
What do you want to talk about?

**Hannah:** We both have projects for school and need to go to the library. I have to research the Civil War...

**Gretel:** And I have to write a paper on Rosa Parks.

**Hannah:** So we thought we'd go after school Monday and maybe Tuesday. OK?

**Jane** (*thinking*): Well, you have been good about coming home after school and haven't complained--so as long as you're home by six, it's OK.

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*Hannah & Gretel glance at each other & grin.*

**Both:** Thanks, Jane. (*All exit.*)

**Narrator:** Sunday night Hansel & Gretel...

**Hansel & Gretel** (*pop heads in*): It's "Hannah" & "Rachel"! (*They go back off stage.*)

**Narrator** (*continuing*) Sorry! Hannah & Rachel could hardly sleep—they were so excited about going to Medea's house after school the next day. And they were barely aware of anything the teachers or their friends were saying—they just kept watching the clock and thinking about chocolate and candy and games.

They met right after school and walked the short distance to Medea's house. The smell of chocolate was overwhelming. They could hardly believe it: the house was made of frosted gingerbread and covered with candy! They immediately started pulling off pieces of frosted shingles and shutters.

**Hannah** (*mouth full*): Omigod—this chocolate is amazing!

**Gretel** (*stuffing mouth*): And this peppermint! Let's combine them. (*They start to share their treats.*)

**Medea** (*initially wearing shawl over head, with "witch face", changing into beautiful, sweet persona as she enters*): Nibble, nibble, like a mouse.  
Who is nibbling at my house?

*Hannah & Gretel jump back, wide-eyed, not saying anything.*

**Medea:** I know my house looks and tastes wonderful, but it's not nice to break pieces off someone's house and eat them.

*Hannah & Gretel look down.*

**Medea:** You know that, right? (*Hannah & Gretel nod*) Well, I will expect you either to pay for the damages or to do some work around here. I figure it will cost about \$1000 to repair my roof and shutters. Do you have \$1000?

*Hannah & Gretel shake their heads.*

I have lots of chores that need doing (*unrolls long scroll; Hannah & Gretel react with dread.*) Since you don't seem eager to work, maybe I should call your parents and get the money from them. (*Hannah & Gretel look at each other with even more alarm.*)

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**Hannah:** No, you don't have to do that. (*Gretel shakes head.*) We'll do chores. (*Gretel nods.*) What do you want us to do?

**Medea:** You can start with re-frosting the side of the house and the roof shingles, which you damaged. And I need you to feed the gummy fish and weed the lollipop garden. When you've done those chores, I'll give you something to eat.

**Gretel:** That doesn't sound too bad. (*to Hannah*): I'll feed the gummy fish and weed the lollipop garden, if you'll re-frost the house and the roof.

**Hannah:** OK.

**Narrator:** So they set to work and in less than an hour, they were done. True to her word, Medea had a snack ready for them: cakes, cookies, fudge, and peppermint sticks. Hannah & Rachel dug into the food eagerly. (*Hannah & Gretel grab the treats and stuff them into their mouths.*) And Medea brought out more food as they finished each dish. (*Medea alternates between "witch" and "beautiful, nice woman", as she goes back and forth to the 'kitchen'; Hannah & Gretel turn around just too late to catch her.*) As she offered them thirds, Hannah & Rachel spoke up:

**Hannah:** Wow! You are an amazing cook! This was the best food I've ever eaten! But I'm stuffed!

**Gretel:** Me, too, but thank you SO much! Everything was SO yummy!

**Medea:** Come back anytime. I love kids and I always have plenty of goodies to eat.

*Hannah and Gretel walk away, smiling and waving good-bye to Medea.*

**Gretel:** She sure was nice. And her house is so chill! I definitely want to come back tomorrow.

**Hannah:** I agree. Nice--and a great cook! And I saw the biggest flat-screen TV ever! But are you sure you're ok? I know you sometimes have problems with your blood sugar when you eat lots of sweets.

**Gretel** (*nodding, licking lips*): I'm fine, as long as I remember to take my medication. By the way, you've got crumbs on your shirt. (*Hannah brushes off shirt.*)

**Hannah:** And you've got chocolate around your mouth. (*Gretel giggles again, wipes mouth.*)

**Narrator:** So Hannah & Rachel hurried home—or actually, they waddled as fast as they could--arriving just at six, as Jane was getting ready to serve dinner.

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**Jane:** Good! You're home just in time. Wash up while I get dinner on the table. We're having chicken and beans and tomatoes—and sugared apple slices for dessert.

**Hannah:** That sounds good, but I'm not really hungry. I..uh..I had a big lunch at school.

**Gretel:** Me, too. I'm just going to finish my homework and go to bed.

**Jane** (*puzzled*): Uh..ok... Did you get your research done?

**Hannah:** Not yet. I have to go back to the library tomorrow to finish.

**Gretel:** Me, too. But I should have it done tomorrow.

**Jane:** OK then. Good night. (*Hannah & Gretel exit.*)

**Narrator:** Shortly after that John came home.

**John:** Hi, Honey! How was your...(notices no Hannah & Gretel) Where are the girls?

**Jane:** They went to bed. It's very strange. They went to the library and then said they didn't want dinner, that they weren't hungry.

**John:** That IS strange. Gretel is always hungry.

**Jane:** And I even made dessert.

**John:** Definitely not like Hansel—I mean Hannah—and Gretel or whatever she's calling herself this week.

**Jane** (*smiling*): This week she's going by "Rachel"

**John:** Right—not like Hannah & Rachel; they love sweets! (*Jane gives him a plate.*)  
But dinner looks delicious and **I** am hungry! (*He eats.*)  
*John & Jane exit.*

**Narrator:** The next day Hannah again met Rachel after school (*Hannah & Gretel enter*), so they could go quickly to the library and then to Medea's house. Just as they were leaving, two of their friends caught up with them.

**Whitney** (*entering and going to Hannah*): Hey, Hannah: You want to go to the mall? My mom's going to drive, and she can take you home afterwards.

**Soren** (*entering and going to Gretel*): Gretel—I mean Rachel—Do you want to come over to my house and play video games? I have Nintendo 64.

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*Hannah & Gretel look at each other, then*

**Hannah:** Thanks, but I've got to get to the library to finish the research for my project, and then go straight home.

**Gretel:** Me, too. Maybe another time, OK?

**Soren:** Gee, you never seem to have time for me lately. Are you mad at me?

**Gretel:** Of course not. We'll get together real soon, I promise.

*The friends walk off, looking disappointed.*

**Gretel:** That might have been fun.

**Hannah:** Yeah, but it'll be more fun at Medea's.

**Gretel:** You're right!

**Narrator:** So Hannah & Rachel went to the library and quickly wrote down a few facts to show Jane. Then they hurried to Medea's.

**Gretel:** I wonder what goodies she has for us today.

**Hannah:** I'm already tasting them. But I think we need to save room for dinner, so Jane won't get suspicious.

**Gretel:** OK.

*We see Medea with her "witchy" face & her shawl over her head; as she sees Hannah & Gretel approaching, she puts the shawl around her shoulders & adopts a pleasant demeanor.*

**Narrator:** Medea greeted them with a smile and gestured for them to come inside to eat. The platters were piled high with even more beautiful cakes, cookies and candies than the day before. And Medea put the new "Twilight" movie on her flat-screen TV. Although Hannah and Rachel had told themselves they wouldn't eat much, they couldn't resist putting one more treat—and then another—into their mouths, until they were full again.

**Hannah:** I think we need to stop. Well, maybe just ONE more bite (*reaches over, takes part of a cookie, then another*).

**Gretel:** This is SO good; I'll stop after I finish watching the movie (*continues to stuff food in her mouth*)

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**Hannah** (to Medea): While Rachel's watching the movie, would you tell me more about your life before you moved here? (*They sit close, while Medea tells Hannah about her life.*)

**Narrator:** Then it was time to head home. Medea gave them each a hug (*Medea does so*) and told them to come back anytime.

**Gretel** (to Hannah): You were right—this was 'way more fun than playing Nintendo 64.

**Hannah:** Or going to the mall.

**Gretel:** Medea is great! I wish she were our new mom...So how are we going to get away to visit her again? I don't think we can say we have to go to the library three days in a row.

**Hannah:** We could tell Jane we're going to a friend's house to study.

**Gretel:** We already talked about that, and agreed she'd probably call to check. (*Hannah nods.*)

**Hannah:** Well, we could skip our last class. The school won't call our parents until we've ditched a couple of times.

**Gretel:** Gee, I don't know. I've never skipped class before.

**Hannah:** It's really no big deal. My friends and I did it last year, and no one noticed.

**Gretel:** OK then, but let's wait until Thursday. (*Hannah shrugs, nods.*)

**Narrator:** So they made a plan to go again two days later. When they got home, Jane again had dinner almost ready, but this time Hannah & Rachel sat at the table and tried to eat.

**Gretel:** This is really good, Jane.

**Hannah:** It sure is. Thanks.

**Gretel** (*after a minute or so*): My stomach hurts. Maybe I got food poisoning at school or the flu that's going around. Excuse me. (*She races from the table.*)

**Hannah:** My stomach hurts, too. Excuse me. (*exits*)

*Jane looks in the direction they went, shakes her head.*

**Narrator:** When John came home (*John enters*) Jane told him what happened at dinner.

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**John:** I wonder what's going on.

**Jane:** I'm beginning to worry about them. They aren't hungry at dinner—or their stomachs ache and they run to the bathroom—and they're harder to get up in the morning than usual.

**John:** And they seem jumpy and restless. I think we'd better keep an eye on them.

**Jane:** Well, I'll tell them I want them to come straight home. They should be done with their research at the library. And I'll take off early from work for a couple days, so I can be home when they get here.

**Narrator:** The next day Hannah & Rachel came home right after school, even though they were tempted to go to Medea's. They even made a point of catching up with their friends on the way home.

**Whitney:** So have you gone to that candy house yet?

**Hannah:** Yeah, actually we went there yesterday after going to the library—but it's a secret; we don't want Jane to know, 'cause I don't think she'd approve.

**Soren (to Rachel):** You went there instead of coming to my house?

**Gretel:** We just stopped there for a minute on the way home. It was no big deal.

**Whitney:** So, what was she like?

**Hannah:** She was mad that we broke off part of her house and ate it.

**Gretel:** And she made us do a bunch of chores.

**Soren:** That doesn't sound like much fun. I wouldn't want to take the chance of getting in trouble--and having to do chores, too.

**Whitney:** So do you think you'll go back?

**Hannah:** Probably not. Gotta go—see you tomorrow.

*(Hannah & Rachel wave good-bye, walk into the house.)*

**Narrator:** When they walked into the house, they were shocked to find Jane home.

**Hannah:** How come you're home?

**Gretel:** Aren't you supposed to be at work?

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**Jane:** I was worried about you, so I took off early, in case you were sick.

**Hannah:** Thanks for being concerned, but we're fine.

**Gretel:** Yeah—you don't have to baby-sit us like we're little kids.

**Jane:** Well, I'm glad you're feeling better. I'm going to start dinner. (*Jane exits.*)

**Gretel** (*whispering to Hannah*): It's a good thing we didn't go to Medea's today.

**Hannah:** Yeah, but I really want to go back. Tomorrow we'll just cut class and go there. Jane probably won't be here when we get home, but just in case, we can leave Medea's early enough to get home on time.

**Gretel:** I don't know. Isn't there something else we could do besides cutting class?

**Hannah:** You could give your teacher a note saying you have a doctor's appointment, and sign Jane's name.

**Gretel** (*pausing, looking worried*): I could probably fake her signature, but...

**Hannah:** Fine! Be a chicken! I'll just go without you. (*walks off*)

**Gretel** (*calling & following her off*) Hannah, wait!

**Narrator** (*to audience*): What do you think? Should Hannah go alone to Medea's? Should Rachel have agreed to go, even though she didn't want to cut class? (*sighs*) Well, despite what you and I think, Hannah went alone to Medea's the next day.

**Medea:** Hi, Hannah. Where's your sister?

**Hansel:** She couldn't come today.

**Medea:** Well, we'll just have to have fun without her, right? (*She grins at Hannah. Medea's hand lingers on Hannah's arm.*) I made your favorite dessert, chocolate fudge cake, and I found some earrings I thought you'd like. (*Medea reaches into pocket, pulls out a small box tied with a bow, hands it to Hannah.*)

**Hannah** (*grinning at her, opens the box, tries on the earrings and admires self in mirror, then takes a forkful of cake*): I just love being here.

**Medea:** And I love having you here. After you're done eating, you can try on some of my other jewelry, if you'd like.

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**Hannah:** Wow! That sounds great! Thanks.

**Medea:** I don't know if I told you, but I wasn't able to have children of my own—to feed them and do things with them and watch them grow up—so having you and Rachel here really makes me happy.

**Hannah:** I didn't know that. *(pause)* I'm glad we make you happy.

*Hannah's cell phone rings; she answers, nods.*

**Hannah:** It's Rachel. She's on her way home, so I'd better be going.

**Medea:** Can't you stay a little longer? I haven't shown you my new convertible. If you're good, I might even let you drive it.

**Hannah:** I wish I could, but my step-mom will have a cow if I'm late. I'll try to come back tomorrow.

**Medea:** I hope you will. I need help hanging the new chocolate shutters. Tell Rachel I missed her today. *(Hugs her. They wave goodbye.)*

**Narrator:** So Hannah and Rachel arrived home “on time”.

**Jane:** Hi, Kids! How was your day?

**Hannah:** Fine.

**Gretel:** It was good.

**Jane:** Anything special happen? *(Hannah & Gretel shake their heads.)* Do you have homework? *(Both nod.)* OK, get your homework done. I'll call you when dinner is ready. *(Goes off.)*

**Gretel** *(checking to make sure Jane has gone, then to Hannah):* So how was Medea?

**Hannah:** She was great! And she had made a chocolate fudge cake. I don't know how she knew it's my favorite—but it was incredible! She said to tell you she missed you.

**Gretel:** Hey, are those new earrings?

**Hannah:** Yeah, Medea gave them to me. Aren't they great?! But I'd better take them off before Jane notices. If you're good, maybe I'll let you borrow them.

**Gretel** *(grinning & admiring the earrings):* Are you going back tomorrow?

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**Hannah:** Absolutely! I had so much fun! And she needs help to hang her new chocolate shutters. Did you know she never had children—she couldn't have them--so our visits are really important to her.

**Gretel:** Then I'll come, too. I've been practicing Jane's handwriting. I'll text you when I'm leaving the school office, and we can meet at the corner.

**Hannah:** Deal! (*They exit.*)

**Narrator:** The following day Hannah again cut class, and Rachel wrote a note to the teacher.

*Gretel comes on stage, followed by Soren.*

**Soren (to Gretel):** Are you leaving early today?

**Gretel:** Yes, I have a doctor's appointment. No big deal—just some tests.

**Soren (to Gretel):** You don't seem like yourself lately. Are you sure you're OK?

**Soren:** You aren't going back to that candy house, are you?

**Gretel:** Of course not. And I'm fine. I'll see you later.

*Gretel and Soren exit in opposite directions.*

*Hannah enters as her cell phone rings; it's Whitney..*

**Voice of Whitney:** Hey, Hannah. Where are you? We're having a surprise test in math today, and the teacher's sure to notice you're missing.

**Hannah (whispering into cell phone):** Oh crap. Well I can't go back now. If she asks, tell her I wasn't feeling well and went home; I'll bring a note tomorrow. Thanks.

**Medea (entering, shawl over head):** Today when Hannah and Rachel arrive, I have a surprise for them. (*cackles*) I've figured out a way to keep them here with me forever. (*She lowers shawl, as Hannah & Gretel enter.*)

(*Greeting Hannah & Gretel warmly*): I'm so happy to see you. (*To Gretel*): I missed you yesterday, Rachel; are you OK? (*Gretel nods.*) I need to borrow Hannah for a few minutes to help me hang the new chocolate shutters, but dig in. The chocolate chip cookies are just out of the oven.

(*Gretel grins, licks lips, grabs cookie, as Medea and Hannah go offstage. Gretel eats a cookie, then a brownie. As she begins eating another cookie, Gretel grabs her head, moans, gets up & starts staggering around the room, bumping into furniture. Calls out*):

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**Gretel:** Hannah! (*Gretel swoons to the floor.*)

**Hannah** (*running in, goes to Gretel*): Are you OK? (*Gretel doesn't answer, points to the cookies*) Do you want another cookie? (*Gretel shakes head loosely; Hannah puts her arm around Gretel, turns to Medea*): Do you think we need to call a doctor?

**Medea:** Of course not. It's a hot day. Maybe she just needs some air. Here, Rachel, have a seat by the window. (*She helps Gretel to a chair, opens window, fans her.*)

**Gretel** (*starting to revive*): Hannah.

**Hannah:** I'm here. What's wrong?

**Gretel** (*mumbling*): Feeling a little dizzy.

**Medea:** She's fine, probably just thirsty. (*To Gretel*): Here, have some soda (*hands her a coke, helps her sip.*) We'll be right back—we just have to finish hanging the shutters. (*Medea takes Hannah's arm; Hannah starts to go with Medea.*)

**Gretel** (*grabbing Hannah's other arm, still mumbling*): No, don't go. I'm scared. (*There is tug-of-war over Hannah.*)

**Medea** (*more irritated*): Hannah, are you going to help me or baby-sit your sister?

**Hannah** (*to Gretel*): You'll be fine. I'll be back in a minute.

*Medea, grinning, leads Hannah offstage.*

*Gretel tries to stand up, swoons again, screams.*

**Hannah** (*running in, with Medea still holding her arm, shakes her off, goes to Gretel*): Rachel, talk to me. (*Gretel doesn't answer; Hannah checks her pulse.*)

**Medea** (*sarcastically*): Fine, sit with your little sister. I thought you cared about me. (*raising voice*) I knock myself out to make your favorite foods, I give you nice things, and what do I get in return? Nothing! (*walks away, turns back, voice softer*): Go ahead—eat. I'm sure you're hungry, and it would be a shame to waste all this food.

**Hannah:** OK. (*She begins to reach for the cookies but stops herself, wonders aloud*): I wonder if there's something wrong with the cookies. (*To audience*): Should I eat this? \_\_\_\_\_ No? Why not? \_\_\_\_\_ You don't trust Medea? Do you think she could have put something in the food? (*turns to Medea, speaks firmly*): Did you do something to my sister? (*Medea looks innocent,*

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*points to self & shakes head, then cackles; Hannah starts to go after her, changes mind, calls to her): I'll deal with you later. I've got to get help for my sister. (Pulls out cell phone.) Oh, no! My cell phone is dead! (Looks briefly, without success, for Rachel's cell phone. To audience): Does anyone have a cell phone I can use to call 911 and my parents? (Hannah gets a cell phone from audience member. Dials and "speaks" into phone, while putting arm around Gretel.)*

**Narrator:** Meanwhile, Jane and John had gone to the school to check on Hannah and Rachel—only to discover they weren't there. They called their children's friends, but no one knew where they were. One friend said

**Whitney:** I think Hannah mentioned going to that candy house around the corner.

**Jane:** Oh, no!

**Soren:** Rachel said it wasn't much fun there. I don't think she would have gone back. She said she had a doctor's appointment.

**Jane:** She did not have a doctor's appointment!

**Narrator:** So John and Jane raced over to Medea's house, ran up the path, and pounded on the door. When it opened, they found Hannah on the phone, with her arm around Rachel.

**Hannah:** I'm so glad you're here--I was just trying to call you—something's the matter with Rachel. Maybe she ate too many sweets or forgot to take her medicine, but I think maybe Medea did something to her.

**Narrator:** John picked up Rachel and carried her outside, just as the paramedics arrived. *(Paramedics—Whitney & Soren or audience members—get stethoscopes out of trunk.)* The paramedics checked Rachel out and gave her some medicine. *(Gretel comes to, groggy but OK.)*

**Hannah (to Medea):** How could you just turn your back when Rachel became sick?

**Medea:** I figured she's old enough to know what she can and can't eat. It's not my fault if she eats too much sugar and feels sick.

**Hannah:** But you're the adult. We trusted you. I thought you loved us.

*(chases Medea around the room and out of the house, as Medea laughs louder.)*

**Narrator:** The next day, Saturday, they were all at home. *(Hannah, Gretel, John, Jane on stage.)*

**John:** We were so worried about you both. *(choking up)* And I was so scared, Gretel,

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that you were going to die. (*This time Gretel doesn't correct him about her name.*)

**Jane:** We need to figure out a way to keep you safe when we're not here—but we know we can't watch you every minute.

**John:** I still don't understand what happened. It's not like you two to lie and cut classes and forge notes.

**Gretel:** I don't know exactly what happened. It was partly that we loved being able to eat all the sweets we wanted, and they tasted really good, but it was more than the sweets. Medea seemed so nice, and then...

**Hannah:** I ditched my friends to be with her. Medea treated me like an adult and even said she might let me drive her car. I wanted to be that grown up, but ... What if I had an accident? I'm so confused.

**Gretel:** And even before—whatever happened—I was beginning to feel weird—kind of jittery and spacey. I love sweets, but maybe I need to eat healthy foods, too, and remember to take my medicine. I think my body feels better when I eat healthier stuff.

**Hannah:** Maybe it was just that you forgot your medicine and ate too much sugar, but I think we need to warn our friends to stay away from her.

**Gretel:** Do you think they'll listen? If my friends had told me not to go there, I probably would have gone anyway.

**Hannah:** But real friends don't let friends do bad things. I wish my friends had talked me out of going. (*Gretel nods.*)

**John:** Maybe we need to form a Neighborhood Watch, in case she tries to lure other children there.

**Hannah:** Rachel and I were at least partly to blame. We were the ones who chose to go there—and to go back again and again. And we also lied to our friends.

**John:** It's hard to hear how sneaky and determined you were, but I appreciate your being honest with us now.

**Hannah:** In fact, the first time we went, we even tore off pieces of her house, because they smelled and tasted so good.

**Jane:** And she didn't call the Police?

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**Gretel:** She said we could either pay her for the damage or do chores, so we did chores.

**Hannah:** But she did need to buy new shutters.

**John:** I think you should pay her back—in money—for the damage you did to her house or at least for the shutters. You can get the money by helping us and doing jobs for our friends.

**Jane:** And we want to be able to trust you again, but you're going to have to earn back our trust. What do you think you need to do to get our trust back?

**Hannah:** Well, we need to be honest with you and more responsible about school.

**Gretel:** And come home after school when you tell us to—without complaining.

**John:** That's great, but for a while we're going to check your cell phone records and what you're doing on the Internet, to make sure you're telling us the truth.

**Jane:** And we'll expect a progress report from each of your teachers. (*Hannah & Gretel groan, then nod.*)

**John:** Also, no I-pod or TV for one week and no using the computer except for homework. (*Hannah and Rachel react with pained expression.*)

**Jane:** That way you won't have distractions and can catch up on your schoolwork.

**John:** I know how much you love your I-pods—and how long you pestered me to buy them for you--but it's only for a week, and you need to learn that there are consequences for bad choices. Any other thoughts?

**Gretel** (*trying to get back Jane's approval*): Maybe we should also help you with the housework.

**Jane** (*smiling*): Thanks. I'd appreciate your help. I'll make up a list of chores I need done. (*pause*) Well, I think you've learned your lesson. I'm just glad you're OK.

**John:** And we'll help you figure out how you can earn the money to repay Medea. We don't trust Medea, so we'll go with you when you go to her house (*choking with emotion*), because we love you and don't want anything bad to happen to you—and people shouldn't get away with hurting other people.

**Jane:** I hope you know I love you, too, even if I'm not your real Mom, and even though I make you eat vegetables.

**Hannah & Gretel:** Vegetables?! Eeuw! (*They make exaggerated "yuck" expression, then start laughing, hug Jane and their Dad, exit together.*)

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**Narrator:** I won't tell you that everything was perfect after that day, but Hannah & Rachel did find a different way to and from school, and they discovered some things about themselves and other people.

*(To audience):*

What do you think they learned? *(Take a couple minutes for comments.)*

Now let's bring our actors out on stage, so you can ask them questions.

*Actors come out, bow, return costumes/props to the trunk.*

*Question & answer period.*

Thank you for coming.

THE END