

Once there was an old woman who had been baking all day. In fact the old woman had been baking all week, all month, all year, all the way back as far as she could remember (and being so old she could remember back quite a way).

The old woman was baking her own house. From a tiny bed-sit with a baby belling in the corner she had managed to create a cottage of cakes and walls of the most sweet smelling bread.

Though she had some jewels from an earlier, unhappy marriage the old woman never thought that she could sell them on and she was worried that if she used them to make the walls of the house they would get scratched. The old woman could cook though and it did not take her long to realise that one brick would cost more than 20 cakes. So she started to bake. Singing away to herself and her little white bird (who would get the scraps and the burned bits) slowly over time the house came together.

She would wake in the morning and after getting on her crutches she would go around and inspect the house; looking at what had been broken in the night, what had gone stale and what needed some care and attention. Finally she would open a sugar glass window and let out her little white bird giving it the chance to fly from the depths of the wood and warn all of the animals that the old woman was still alive and so they could not yet go and claim the house for their own.

Years previously when the a dearth had fell on the land the animals came a nibbling and a grubbing at the door. The old woman had told them there and then that this was her house and she needed it to live in, however when she was long in her box they could come and feast. Though the rabbits complained and the squirrels grumbled they knew that she could be swift with her crutches and crack their heads, so they left a large enough ring around the breaded house and every day they looked for the bird in the morbid hope that she would be gone and they could descend and devour the house, especially now that a second dearth had fallen on the land and even the humans on the edge of the forest were keeping their crumbs and fats.

This particular day the white bird flew to tell that the old woman was alive again. However the animals were no longer interested for only yesterday a badger had seen a boy and a girl wander deep into the woods and the boy had dropped breadcrumbs all along the route. Like the beasts that they were they descended on the bread crumbs and gobbled them up.

The white bird was intrigued by this and, his belly full from the previous days baking off cuts, decided to seek the source of this bounty. It did not take him long to hear the snivels and the moans of to children walking deep into the wood picking at the maggoty berries that lined the paths.

Soon the bird learned their names (a certain Hansel and a certain Gretel) and learned the cause of their snivvleding. Unsuprisingly it was their mother (a bird learned early in life that the father was impassivew and the mother the one that made the decisions and so made the children as they were) that was the problem. AS the dearth continued the children ate and the children lazed around watching the TV and playing games. So the mother decided to be rid onve and for all, they never really listened anyway so it was easier to take them to the woods and leave their scrawy backsides to fend for themselves. She would miss the social payments but there would be no need to declare them dead straight away.

Gretel had heard this though. He often stayed up late and he heard her plan. He cleverly thought

Thinking in that small way that bids do he realised that if his mistress fed him scraps she would surely do the same with these little whippersnappers. Especially ones with snotty noses and red rimmed eyes. He had seen her feed them before.

The kids then refuse to help her, saying that they can get the same from the social worker. She keeps trying to indulge them but in the end they see she is old and frail and after Gretel finds her jewels she pushes her in the oven

Hansel and Gretel found their way back to the house their pockets stuffed with the old woman's jewels and their mouths filled with the old woman's bread. Their father looked up from his paper, only slightly surprised to see them and then went back to that days racing form. Thus they lived ever after.

Three days later when the white bird had not returned to tell the news of the old woman the animals of the wood cautiously returned to the house and started to nibble away at what the children had left behind.
Soon there was nothing left except a hot oven and a slight smell of burning cloth.