

3. Henry and Grace and the Haunted Hut

Once upon a time, there lived a brother and sister named Henry and Grace. They lived in a small house with their father and stepmother. Their stepmother had no love for them.

“Take those children into the forest,” said the stepmother to their father. “And make sure they never come back.”

So, Henry and Grace’s father loaded them into a cart, and took them deep into the forest.

After many hours, they stopped by a stream.

“Go and get sticks for a fire,” said their father. “I will stay with the cart.”

So, Henry and Grace walked farther into the forest. Six black birds began to follow them.

In time, Henry and Grace returned with some sticks. But their father was nowhere to be found.

“How will we get home?” asked Grace. She began to cry.

“Stepmother asked father to leave us here,” said Henry. He pointed to a path he had made from breadcrumbs. “But this path will show us the way home.”

Henry and Grace began following the crumbs. With each step, the forest grew darker and darker. Then suddenly, the crumb path ended.

Henry and Grace looked around. They saw eyes glowing in the dark.

Eyes high. Eyes low.

Eyes peeking behind trees. And eyes moving toward them. But no crumbs.

“Hurry!” said Henry. “Follow them.”

“I see a light in that hut by the lake,” said Grace. “The birds must be taking us there.”

Henry and Grace ran to the hut. “Go in! Go in!” screeched the birds.

Henry and Grace went up to the hut’s door.

“It smells like candy,” said Grace.

A small piece broke off. Henry took a bite.

“It tastes like candy, too. Can it be?”

Just then the door creaked open. An old woman looked out at them.

“Come in, kids,” she said. “You must be starving.”

And as Henry and Grace went inside, the six black birds laughed.

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