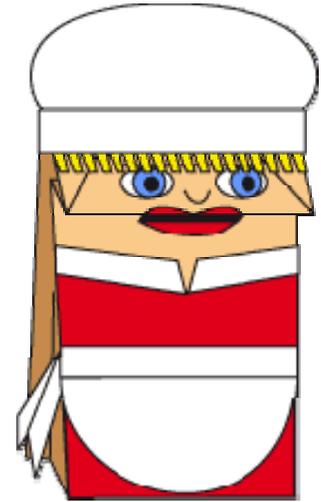


Clever Gretel

A Brothers Grimm Folktale from Germany

Characters

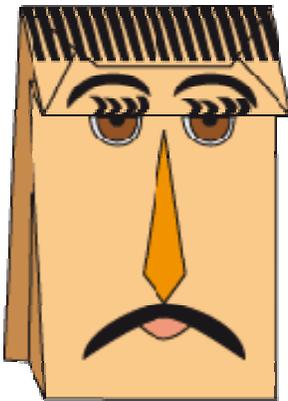
Gretel - Mayor's clever cook
Mayor - slow and proud
Banker - Mayor's timid guest



Scene 1

The curtain opens on Gretel roasting two chickens in the kitchen fire. The mayor enters the kitchen.

Mayor: Gretel, how is dinner coming? My guest, Banker, will be late.



Gretel: Oh, my! The birds are almost done. Surely they will burn if he doesn't arrive soon.

Mayor: Do your best, my dear. I'm sure they will be fine in your able hands.

(Mayor leaves the kitchen.)

Gretel: *(to herself)* I'm sure the hens will burn. Does Mayor think it is possible to keep the chickens warm and ready to eat without the fire burning them?

(She carefully inspects the birds.)

Gretel: *(to herself)* See! That wing is already starting to burn. It will be a waste! I'd better eat it right now.

(Turns towards the fire and makes sounds of eating.)

Gretel: *(facing audience)* Hmm... That was very tasty. Mayor and his guest don't know what they are missing.

Gretel: *(shouts to Mayor)* Has Banker arrived yet?

Mayor: *(pokes head into kitchen)* I'll go see what's keeping him.

Gretel: *(to herself)* There's another burned spot. I'd better eat it before it's too burnt. My, that was delicious! Oh, there's another burned spot and another...

(She nibbles on the first chicken and mutters until it is gone.)

Gretel: *(to herself)* Oh, my! I've finished one of the chickens. Well, I guess where the first one went the second one belongs.

(Curtain drops on scene 1 as Gretel continues to make comments and eating noises.)

Scene 2

The curtain opens on the entrance hall of Mayor's house. Mayor enters hall.

Mayor: Gretel! Banker will be here presently.

Gretel: *(enters hall from other side)* Yes, sir. I'll make the final preparations for dinner.

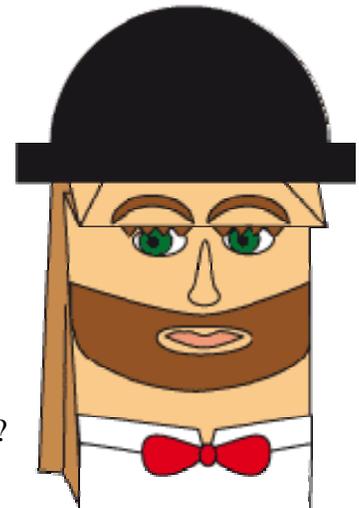
(Mayor goes offstage into the dining room. There he starts to sharpen the carving knife on a stone. Make sharpening noise.)

(Gretel must think fast. She answers Banker's knock on the door.)

Gretel: *(in a low and fearful voice)* Good evening, Banker!

Banker: *(surprised)* Good evening, Gretel. I'm here for dinner. What's bothering you?

Gretel: *(whispers while listening to sharpening noise)* Banker, do you hear that? Mayor is sharpening his knife and plans to cut off your ear.



Banker: (*scared*) Good gracious! What ever brought this on?

(*Banker runs out the door.*)

Gretel: (*shouts*) Mayor, your guest has just stolen the two birds from the fire and has run away!

Mayor: (*enters hall*) Didn't he even leave me one?

(*Mayor runs across the stage shouting with the knife still in his hand.*)

Mayor: Come back! I just want one!

Gretel: (*signs in relief and giggles*) Mayor means one chicken, but Banker thinks he means one ear!

(*Curtain drops. The End.*)

About the Play - Clever Gretel

<http://AuntAnnie.com/Puppets/BrownBag>

In the original Brothers Grimm tale, Gretel is a gay and happy cook. She wore red shoes and drank red wine out of sheer delight. Part of that story is Gretel drinking more and more wine as she consumes the chickens.

Puppets

Make the Gretel, Mayor and Banker hand puppets from the Paper Bag Puppets project at AuntAnnie.com.

Sets

You will need kitchen and entrance hall backdrops. For the kitchen backdrop draw an open fireplace with a cooking fire. Add a few pots and pans.

Props

You will need two roasting chickens and a carving knife. Print the roasting chicken pattern and tape or glue them to bamboo skewers or other small sticks. Cut out the carving knife included in the Mayor puppet cutouts pattern. Either attached the knife to the Mayor puppet or tape it to a bamboo skewer.

Staging Tips

- This play requires at least 2 puppeteers. One puppeteer may operate Gretel and the chickens. The other puppeteer handles Mayor and Banker.
- Use a metal knife or screwdriver rubbed on a stone to make the sharpening sound.

The Story

We laugh at this story of Gretel tricking Mayor and his guest. Why do we laugh? Was Gretel right? Is there a lesson to learn from this story?

The Brothers Grimm, Jacob and Wilhelm, began gathering folktales from all over Germany in 1806. They published their first volume of *Kinder-und Hausmarchen* (Children's and Household Tales) in 1812. A second volume was published in 1815. They continued to collect and publish tales for years to come while they worked as librarians.