

## The Girl Who Trod on the Loaf

From the book, "Children's Classics in Dramatic Form" by Augusta Stevenson  
Suggested by Hans Andersen's "The Girl Who Trod on the Loaf"

### SCENE I

*TIME: The day before Christmas*

*PLACE: Inge's Mother's home.*

**CHARACTERS:**

*Inge*

*Her mother*

*(The Mother stands at the kitchen window, watching for Inge.)*

MOTHER: Ah, here she comes at last! *(Short pause. Enter Inge.)* I have waited long for you, my child. Where have you been?

*(Inge is silent.)*

MOTHER: Have you been to the Elf Hill? Tell me.

INGE: *(Hesitating.)* Just for a little while, Mother.

MOTHER: Inge! Inge! What have I ever told you?

INGE: I thought I'd go just this once.

MOTHER: *(Showing sorrow.)* Ah, Inge, that's what you always say.

INGE: There's no harm talking about the elves.

MOTHER: And I, your mother, say there is harm.

INGE: But, Mother,—they talk so prettily.

MOTHER: *(Nodding.)* Aye! And that's the harm. They've put such silly ideas into your head.

INGE: They say 't is friendship makes them talk as they do.

MOTHER: *(Indignantly.)* Friendship! 'T is friendship, is it, to tell you not to fetch the wood?

INGE: They say 't will spoil my hands.

MOTHER: Out upon them and their pretty talk! You shall go there no more. Do you hear me, Inge?

INGE: (*Pouting.*) I hear.

MOTHER: Now take this loaf of bread to your sick aunt. Say to her 't is her Christmas gift.

INGE: But, Mother, I must cross the muddy road to go there.

MOTHER: Well, you are neither sugar nor salt.

INGE: I'll spoil my shoes!

MOTHER: You think of your shoes, and your aunt lies ill?

INGE: Wait till spring and the mud will be gone.

MOTHER: Wait till spring and your aunt will be gone! Here is the loaf—now off with you!

*(Inge takes the loaf and goes, but not willingly.)*

## SCENE II

*TIME: A few minutes later*

*PLACE: The muddy road*

*CHARACTERS:*

*Inge*

*The Wicked Elf*

*(Inge is seen stopping at the muddy road.)*

INGE: 'T is too wide to leap!

*(The wicked Elf suddenly appears on the opposite side of the road.)*

WICKED ELF: Good day to you, pretty maid!

INGE: Good day to you, dear Elf!

WICKED ELF: Wilt cross this muddy road?

INGE: I must.

WICKED ELF: Then I'll tell you how to do it and not so much as wet your shoe.

INGE: Oh, thank you, dear Elf!

WICKED ELF: Throw down your loaf and—

INGE: (*Showing surprise; interrupting.*) Throw down the loaf?

WICKED ELF: Why, yes, —to use it for a stepping-stone.

INGE: But 't will spoil the bread!

WICKED ELF: But 't will save your shoes!

INGE: Well, that's true—

WICKED ELF: A pretty maid ne'er wears a muddy shoe.

INGE: That's true, too—

WICKED ELF: Come, then, throw down the loaf!

INGE: Well, I'll do it! (*She throws the loaf and steps upon it.*) 'T is sinking! What shall I do?

WICKED ELF: Why, then, jump off!

INGE: (*Trying to jump.*) I can't! Don't you see I can't?

WICKED ELF: Ha, ha! You're fastened to it!

INGE: 'T is drawing me down! Help me! Help me!

WICKED ELF: There's no help for you.

INGE: No help? What do you mean?

WICKED ELF: You must go down with the loaf.

INGE: I pray you help me! See how I'm sinking! The mud will soon be over my shoes!

WICKED ELF: The mud will soon be over your head!

INGE: *(Weeping.)* Save me! Save me!

WICKED ELF: Will you be saved by magic?

INGE: Yes, yes!

WICKED ELF: Listen, then—I'll change you into a bird. Are you willing?

INGE: Yes, yes! Quick now, before I sink deeper!

WICKED ELF: *(Nodding head three times.)* A sparrow shall you be! Change, now change!

*(Inge changes into a sparrow, with a tuft of white feathers, just the shape of a loaf of bread, upon her head. The Sparrow flies from the mud.)*

SPARROW: Now change me back into Inge.

WICKED ELF: You shall remain as you are.

SPARROW: *(Showing surprise.)* Remain as I am?

WICKED ELF: *(Nodding.)* Until you change yourself back.

SPARROW: And when will that be?

WICKED ELF: When the loaf has gone from your head.

SPARROW: The loaf from my head? What do you mean?

WICKED ELF: *(Going.)* Fly away to the brook and see! Ha, ha, ha! *(She runs away, calling back.)*  
Fly away to the brook and see! Ha, ha, ha!

### SCENE III

*TIME: The day following Christmas day*

*PLACE: An old stone wall by a brook*

*CHARACTERS:*

*The Sparrow*

*The Peasant  
Gretel  
First Stone  
Second Stone  
Third Stone*

*(The Sparrow sits in a hole in the wall.)*

FIRST STONE: Come, come, be not so sad, little Sparrow!

SECOND STONE: Come, lift up your head and sing!

THIRD STONE: Come, sing us your Christmas song!

SPARROW: Sing! I have nothing to sing about.

FIRST STONE: Sing of your friends.

SECOND STONE: Sing of their love for you.

THIRD STONE: Sing of their kindness to you.

SPARROW: Talk not to me of friends, or love, or kindness! There's none in the world.

*(Enter a Peasant with his little Gretel. The Peasant carries two ears of corn.)*

PEASANT: Now, my Gretel, we'll place the corn here on the old wall.

GRETEL: Mother thought you brought too much.

PEASANT: Well, 't is true there are only three ears left at home, but the birds must have their Christmas dinner. *(He places the corn on the wall.)*

GRETEL: There's none about to see it!

PEASANT: Oh, some bird will soon find it!

GRETEL: But will it call the others?

PEASANT: We'll wait to see. Come, we'll sit there on the log. *(They go to a log nearby.)*

FIRST STONE: There, little Sparrow, say you now there is no kindness?

SECOND STONE: Or love?

THIRD STONE: Or friendship?

SPARROW: No, no! I can never say that again. The peasant's heart is full of kindness and love and friendship. I will sing of it! 'T will be my Christmas song! (*The Sparrow leaves the hole and flies to the corn.*)

GRETEL: Look, Father, there is a sparrow! And hear it sing! Just hear it!

PEASANT: It is calling the other birds.

GRETEL: Why, it doesn't even touch the corn!

PEASANT: It's waiting to share it with the others. Is it not a pretty sight? Come, we must go tell Mother.

#### SCENE IV

*TIME: One month later*

*PLACE: Same as Scene III*

**CHARACTERS:**

*Our Sparrow*

*The very old sparrow*

*The old sparrow*

*The young sparrow*

*The very young sparrow*

*The wicked elf*

*(All the sparrows except Our Sparrow sit on the stone wall.)*

YOUNG SPARROW: I say the stranger should be driven away!

VERY YOUNG SPARROW: So say I!

OLD SPARROW: The stranger is a sparrow, but still not a sparrow.

VERY OLD SPARROW: And yet she is only different by a tuft of white feathers.

YOUNG SPARROW: And such a tuft! For all the world like a loaf of bread!

VERY YOUNG SPARROW: I'd think it shame to carry such on my head!

OLD SPARROW: I fear 't will shame us all to have this stranger about.

VERY OLD SPARROW: And yet we are not ashamed to eat the crumbs this stranger brings.

OLD SPARROW: Well, 't is true she has been most kind.

VERY OLD SPARROW: 'T is a hard winter! Shall we drive away the one who finds food where we find none?

YOUNG SPARROW: And calls us every time!

VERY YOUNG SPARROW: And never eats till we have come!

VERY OLD SPARROW: I've kept in mind the crumbs she has found us. Now, how many do you think?

OLD SPARROW: I cannot say, for I did not think to notice.

VERY OLD SPARROW: There only lacks two or three now of being a loaf.

OTHER SPARROWS: *(Greatly surprised.)* A loaf?

VERY OLD SPARROW: *(Nodding.)* A loaf.

VERY YOUNG SPARROW: Here comes the stranger now!

OLD SPARROW: She brings a crust!

*(Our Sparrow flies up with a crust in its bill.)*

OUR SPARROW: Come, friends, 't is for all of you!

VERY OLD SPARROW: Do you know, stranger bird, that, with these crumbs, you have brought us in all one loaf?

*(Our Sparrow drops the crust for the others. At once it changes into Inge. The bird fly away frightened.)*

INGE: Ah! Now I understand. The loaf had to be made up, crumb by crumb.

*(The Wicked Elf suddenly appears.)*

WICKED ELF: Come, pretty maid, come to the Elf Hill!

INGE: No, no! I will not!

WICKED ELF: But we have such pretty things to tell you!

INGE: I care not for your pretty things! I go to fetch wood for my mother. I go to walk in the mud if need be. Away with you! I'll have none of you! Away, away, I say!