***ONE NOVEMBER EVENING…***

It was a cold, dark November evening. It was raining heavily and strong wind was blowing. In the streets of the town there were almost no people because no one wanted to leave their houses in such a horrible weather. In the distance two children wearing raincoats and wellingtons were running fast. The boy was holding his little sister’s hand so as not to lose her. He was looking behind in fear of something. It was almost 7 pm and Mr Brown was leaving his office. He locked the door, opened his huge black umbrella and started walking home thinking of a delicious hot evening meal with his wife and children when suddenly, somebody bumped into him. The turned and saw two kids soaked wet and trembling with cold. They were looking at him with their big, scared eyes. ‘What happened?’ Mr Brown asked.

“No-No-No-Nothing” the boy answered. That morning they were woken up by a conversation in the next room. “They eat far too much. If they keep on like this, soon we’ll all die of starvation. We must get rid of them. Let’s do it tomorrow,” they heard their step-mother say. “I don’t want to abandon my children, ”said their father. He didn't think the plan was a good idea. But his wife was very persistent and she kept talking and talking until he was convinced and willing to do what she said. The next morning the family woke up early, before sunrise. “Today we’re going to cut some wood for the winter. It’s going to be a long day,” said their step-mother. “Take these pieces of bread and don’t eat them before noon,because then you will get hungry too early.” The boy gave his bread to his sister to hold.

Cutting wood was a difficult task in the wet and cold. The handle of the axe was hard to hold and despite the makeshift cover of the woodshed, small drops of rain still dripped in, making it slippy. “Don’t be so careless” the step mother barked as she watched the children struggle with the heavy tool. “We cannot afford to waste this wood!” Wearily the boy tried again with increased concentration. The fear made him work harder but the piercing eyes of his step mother made him nervous and careless. The boy was also hungry, but he dare not complain for fear of reprisal. His sister was working busily, carrying the chopped wood to stack in the corner of the dilapidated outhouse. With every load, she became wearier. With every step, the muscles in her legs became weaker. She thought longingly about the bread in her pocket and wondered if her brother would mind that she’d already managed to sneak a small portion into her mouth to keep her energy levels sufficiently high to carry on working.

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The girl ate a little more than she should have. When she noticed that she’d been eating for a while, she stopped and looked at the small peice of remaining bread in horror. As she was frozen in place, her stepmother looked over her way, only to notice her husbands daughter lazing around. She also noticed that the child had bread crumbs all over her mouth, and only a small portion of the bread was in her hand.

She stomped over to her stepdaughter in fury, and shouted at her.

„You little demon! Do you realize how much we work to feed ourselves?! Only for you to eat it away! You and your brother are both burdens to our family! Get out of my sight!”