

Dialogue Sample from

HANS BRINKER OR THE SILVER SKATES

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[The TOWNSPEOPLE of Amsterdam greet one another and celebrate the holiday season. As young people skate on the frozen canals, the prominent MYNHEER VAN GLECK proposes a race in honor of his wife's birthday on Christmas Eve. From across the canal, HANS skates on joyfully, wearing tattered clothes and wooden skates. GRIETJA follows him, skating tentatively and also wearing tattered clothes and wooden skates.)

HANS

Come on, Grietja!

GRIETJA

Hans, wait up! My strap, it's broken again!

HANS

Well, hurry and fix it! We've little time for skating.

GRIETJA

I can't. The strap is too short. Can't you fix it, Hans?

(With a cheerful shrug, HANS goes to help her. GRIETJA admires two SKATERS who race by.)

GRIETJA (Continued)

How well they look! Oh, these miserable skates. Ow, not so tight, Hans!

HANS

Sorry. The skates would fit better, Grietja, if you were wearing your stout leather shoes instead of --

GRIETJA

Hans, have you forgotten? The father threw my shoes in the fire.

(Growing tearful at the memory)

Before I knew what he had done, my shoes were all curled up from the heat and --

(In real pain as HANS ties the strap)

Ow! Oh, these stupid skates!

HANS

I'm sorry, Grietja. I'll fix it, never fear. But we must be quick. The mother will need us at home.

(HE ties her strap as several SKATERS cross, continuing their race.)

HANS (Continued)

There. That should do for now.

GRIETJA

Oh, Hans, I'm sorry. I should never complain about my skates. Who could believe you could carve skates from wood? With silver paint they would look like all the others.

HANS

But the wood always becomes wet and sticks and then I fall on my face.

GRIETJA

You hardly ever fall on your face.

HANS

(Laughing)

If only practice made perfect, but not on these poor, wooden blades.

(Doing a trick for GRIETJA, HANS falls.)

GRIETJA

That was a fine tumble!

(Going to help him)

Are you hurt?

HANS

Not a bit.

(GRIETJA tries to help HANS to his feet but THEY both fall to the ice, laughing. PETER,

JACOB and CARL race by.)

CARL

Out of my way, peasant boy!

PETER

Sorry! Come on, Jacob!

(BOYS skate off.)

GRIETJA

Oh, wouldn't you love to glide across the ice on real skates? Can you imagine gliding across the canal, not on clumsy wooden blades, but on shiny metal ones?

HANS

With real skates I'm sure you would be the finest and fastest skater in all Holland.

(VOOSTENWALBERT skates by breathlessly,
following the others.)

VOOSTENWALBERT

Wait up! I'm coming!

HANS

Times are hard for us now, Grietja. Even harder for you, I think, because you have no memories of happiness. For now, I'm afraid it's sticking and stopping on wooden skates for both of us, little sister. We must do the best we can.

SONG: "DO THE BEST YOU CAN"

HANS AND GRIETJA

(A well dressed COUPLE enters, skating gracefully arm-in-arm.)

HANS

In the winter, when canals are frozen over,
all the lucky children of the well-to-do
find their skates too tight to wear,
so they buy a brand-new pair;
and they speed along the icy avenue.

(COUPLE skates off.)

But if your only skates
are made by hand and wooden,

and you know you'd get there faster if you ran,
when your life has not been blest
 with the newest and the best,
then you do the best you can.

GRIETJA

I'll grow up, and buy a
 brand-new coat each birthday.
And I'll toss out all these
 ragged hand-me-downs.
On the weekdays, I suppose,
 I'll be dressed in fancy clothes.
But on weekends, I'll wear only ev'ning gowns.

For my birthday, chocolate layer cake with icing,
but, before that, I want pheasant under glass.
Tell me, won't it be a thrill
 eating or'nges from Brazil,
with my stomach full, just like the upper class?

(Dialogue underscored.)

HANS

Tell me, Grietja, when was the last time your stomach was full?

GRIETJA

The last time? I can't even remember a first time.

When you earn some gilders
 picking summer tulips,

HANS

but the money goes for food to feed your clan,

GRIETJA

if you work the whole day through,

HANS

but your benefits are few,

BOTH

then you do the best you can.

GRIETJA

If your winter coat has holes as big as saucers,

HANS

if you have no loving uncle Kubla Kahn,

GRIETJA

[no uncle Kubla Kahn.]

BOTH

when you footwear has a hole
 where it ought to have a sole,
then you do the best you can.

(HANS and GRIETJA fall on the ice laughing.)

END OF SONG