UNIT 4

# Greedy Grethel

Grethel, Mr. Charles' cook had a very high opinion of herself. She was very proud of her culinary skills and of her position in the house of a fine gentleman. She sauntered about the town with airs and graces, reminding people about her accomplishments. Every day, she made a point of rewarding herself with breaks and treats as often as possible.

Grethel had established a nice routine at work. While preparing the master's breakfast each morning, she would drink a refreshing glass of sparkling pear juice. The effervescence boosted her spirits and her appetite, so she would dish up a plate of whatever she was cooking for the master, saving the crispiest rashers and the softest fried eggs for herself.

"It is crucial," said she, "for a cook to know how things should taste."

After Mr. Charles had been served, Grethel would kick off her shoes, put her feet up and savour a well-deserved pot of tea and some warm scones with jam and cream – a "cream tea", her dear old grandma used to call it. This was the most tranquil part of the day and it gave her a chance to share a bit of gossip with Bridie, the maid. Bridie was worth her weight in gold, according to Grethel, so she deserved a bit of entertainment during the hours of meticulous scrubbing, polishing and sweeping. As Grethel always said, "A clean chef is a happy chef."

One afternoon Mr. Charles summoned the cook to the drawing room.

"Grethel," he said. "I have invited an important guest to dine with me this evening and I want you to serve the pheasant that I caught yesterday."

"Certainly, I will, Your Lordship," answered Grethel.

"Grethel, I've told you a hundred times already, I'm not a lord. 'Sir' or 'Mr. Charles' will do nicely," he said with exasperation.

"Yes, Your Honour, right you are," said Grethel as she backed out of the room curtseying and bowing and scraping.



When Grethel had plucked and cleaned the pheasant, she put it on the spit above the fire to roast. It started to brown, so she made some buttery mash potato and sweet garden peas. When the food was ready, there was still no sign of the guest.

"It'll be ruined if he doesn't get here soon," Grethel complained to Mr. Charles. "The pheasant is cooked to perfection and it won't do to keep it warm for much longer."

Mr. Charles did not like to see Grethel vexed, so he ran out to the road in case his guest was lost.

"I'm getting weary," Grethel sighed, when he was gone. "And who knows when that pair will sit down to eat? What a carry-on."

To cheer herself up, she poured a drink of sparkling pear juice and raised her glass saying, "Here's to me." After a long, satisfying gulp she felt better, so she guzzled another glass.

Feeling revived, she basted the pheasant with butter to stop it from drying out. As she turned the spit, the delectable smell of the meat wafted into her nostrils and she was filled with a longing to taste it. Unable to fight the temptation, she lunged forward and ripped off a wing. Delicious! When that was eaten, she polished off the other one to even things out.

"Well thank heavens, it's not ruined!" she said, licking her fingers and discarding the bones. "But it'll be a sin if it's not eaten soon."

She looked out the window and there was no sign of Mr. Charles or the guest.

"They might have stopped at a neighbour's house, for all I know," she thought.

As she turned the spit again, she was overcome by the aroma and by the memory of the delicious wings. She hardly knew what came over her until it was too late. In a moment of weakness she ripped off a leg and devoured it with gusto. For the sake of symmetry, she also tucked away the second leg. A balanced meal is important for your health, so she wolfed down the mash and peas as well.

UNIT 4

# Activities

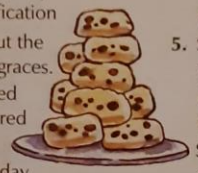
## A Fact Finding

1. Describe how Grethel "had a very high opinion of herself".
2. How does Grethel behave when she is summoned to the drawing room?
3. What reason was given for Grethel eating the peas and mash?
4. Why did Mr. Charles not hear his guest at the front door?
5. What did Grethel do to deceive Mr. Charles?

## B Choose the word closest in meaning to the underlined word.

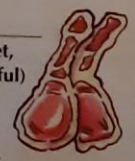
1. "'Sir' or 'Mr. Charles' will do nicely," he said with **exasperation**.
   (a) annoyance (b) severity
   (c) serenity (d) gratification
2. She **sauntered** about the town with airs and graces.
   (a) bustled (b) hurried
   (c) strolled (d) bartered
3. This was the most tranquil part of the day.
   (a) active (b) buoyant
   (c) peaceful (d) exhausting
4. He rapped very **genteelly** at the door.
   (a) mannerly (b) forcefully
   (c) rhythmically (d) coarsely
5. She pulled the door **sneakily** behind her.
   (a) overtly (b) secretly
   (c) discourteously (d) noisily

She ripped off a leg and devoured it with **gusto**.
(a) gravy (b) apathy
(c) starvation (d) enthusiasm



## C Choose the most suitable word for each sentence.

1. The _____ for the party were on the brink of disaster. **(prepare, preparations, arrange, arranged)**
2. I took a last _____ look behind me. **(regret, repent, lamented, rueful)**
3. Obviously, he was a _____ judge of players. **(perceptive, evidence, view, observant)**
4. The most dramatic _____ I have are the historic sights. **(reminiscent, nostalgia, recollections, account)**
5. An _____ occurred in the capital. **(intrusive, explosion, blast-off, detonation)**
6. The sailor looked out through the porthole of the _____. **(lodge, hut, chalet, cabin)**



The ravaged pheasant carcass lay on the table and she had almost picked it clean when suddenly Mr. Charles called from the hallway.

"You may serve soon, Grethel," he said. "I have spotted the carriage and my guest will arrive shortly."

Grethel almost choked. "Very well, Your Highness," she said, trying to swallow a mouthful of pheasant. "I'll get right to work."

Mr Charles went directly to the dining room, where he took out a large carving knife and began sharpening it on a whetstone. The guest arrived and because he was embarrassed about being late, he rapped very genteelly at the door.

Mr. Charles could not hear the knocking above the noise of the knife on the whetstone. However, Grethel heard it and she never moved so fast in her life. She jumped through the doorway and pulled the door sneakily behind her. She seized hold of the alarmed guest and clamped her hand over his mouth saying, "Shush! Run for your life! Don't let the maniac Mr. Charles catch you! He only asked you here because he wants to cut off your ears! You can hear him sharpening his knife in there, but you won't be hearing anything else if you don't skedaddle now."

The terror-stricken guest held onto his ears as he ran for his life. In his panic to escape, he forgot about his carriage and the driver galloped along behind him, trying to catch up.

Grethel ran to the dining room and began wringing her hands.

"Oh, rotter! Fiend!" she cried. "Your guest arrived and only stayed long enough to rob you of your food. He took the whole pheasant, as well as the mash and the peas."

"How bizarre!" exclaimed Mr. Charles. "The man must be insane. I've been hungry all this time. He could at least have left me with one thing to eat!"

He ran out the door with the carving knife still in his hand and shouted, "Only one for heaven's sake! Is that too much to ask?"

The poor guest thought that he meant only one of his ears, and he kept running like there was no tomorrow.

## D

**Between the lines. Choose the correct answer.**

1. Grethel rewarded herself every day with a treat of
   (a) rashers, eggs and apple juice.
   (b) tea and warm scones with jam and cream.
   (c) pheasant with potato mash and sweet garden peas.
   (d) apple tart and ice-cream.
2. Which of the following does Grethel NOT call Mr. Charles?
   (a) Your Lordship
   (b) Your Honour
   (c) Your Excellency
   (d) Your Highness
3. Grethel ripped a wing off the pheasant because
   (a) she couldn't resist the delectable smell.
   (b) she wanted to check if it was drying out.
   (c) she was vexed that the guest hadn't arrived.
   (d) she wanted to make sure it was cooked to perfection.
4. Which of the following is FALSE?
   (a) Mr. Charles was sharpening the carving knife when the guest knocked.
   (b) The guest apologised for being late when Grethel opened the door.
   (c) Grethel went outside to frighten the guest away.
   (d) Grethel told the guest that Mr. Charles wanted to cut his ears off.
5. When Mr. Charles is told that the guest stole his dinner he
   (a) doubts Grethel and accuses her of lying.
   (b) runs outside to retrieve it from the fleeing man.
   (c) runs outside in frustration to say his piece.
   (d) chases the man down the road with a carving knife in his hand.

## E

**Grammar**

**Underline the verbs (action words) in the following passage.**

All the girls felt uncomfortable whenever Rebecca Dooley appeared in the playground. "Maria," she scowled, "you're a snivelling little princess". Maria was trembling and her eyes were darting about, looking for a way out of the situation. She was trapped.

## F

**Character Description**

Describe Grethel, saying what kind of person that you think she is. Did you like Grethel after reading this story? Explain your answer.

## G

**Strrrrrrrrretcher!**

Write an alternative ending for the story, beginning at the point when the guest knocks at the door.