Once upon a time there was a little boy who lived on a farm. His family was poor and did not have money to pay a workman, so all day long he worked hard helping his father in the field and taking care of the farm animals. But at the end of each day, when the work was done and the sun began to go down, there came an hour which was all his own.

When this time came he would often go to the top of a hill near his house and look across at another hill a long way away. There, on the far-off hill, stood a house with golden windows. As the sun went down he would sit on the hill watching this house. But it seemed to him as if someone always closed the shutters just as darkness came and he could no longer see the beautiful windows. It looked like any other farmhouse. Then the little boy would go home to his dinner, wishing all the time that he could live in a house with golden windows.

One morning as the little boy sat down to eat breakfast his father said, “You have been a good boy and have been working very hard. So today, you can have a holiday. Take this day and do anything you wish. But remember that for a farmer, any day you don’t have to work in the fields is special. Use the day well and try and learn something good from it.”

The little boy thanked his father, and decided to set off to see if he could find the house with golden windows. He took some bread and fruit to eat on the way, kissed his mother and started off on his journey.
He was not scared of getting lost because there was only one road that went by his farm. The nearest town was very far away and there were no side roads, other than those that led to each farmhouse. He saw that the farms along the way were owned by poor families such as his own. But as he walked he thought to himself, “There must be one rich family on this road; the people who own the house with the golden windows.”

It was fun to be walking like this and not working. He wasn’t wearing shoes and when he looked back he laughed because it seemed as if the marks left by his feet were following him. He was very happy and sang and danced as he walked.

The time went by quickly. Soon he came to a small river. He was feeling hungry and sat down under a large tree that grew next to the water. There he drank some cold water from the river and ate his food. As he was eating, he broke off some small pieces of bread, as he had seen his mother do, and left them under the tree for birds to eat once he had gone. When he was finished, he went on his way again.

After walking a little more the little boy came to a high, green hill. There, near the top of the hill, was the house he had come to find. At first he thought that the shutters were closed for he could not see the golden windows. But he was sure that this was the right house so he turned from the road and walked up to it. When he was near enough to see the house better he could have cried, for there were no shutters and no gold; the windows were of normal glass like any others.

A woman came to the door, and asked the little boy very kindly what he wanted. “At the end of every day I see your golden windows from the top of a hill near our farm,” he said, “and now I have come here to see them. But I find that they are only glass.”
The woman moved her head from side to side and laughed. “We are poor farming people,” she said, “and I don’t think there will ever be any gold about our windows. Anyway, glass is better than gold to see through.” She asked the little boy to sit down and rest. She brought him a cup of milk and a cake and called her little girl, a child of his own age, to sit with him. The woman went back to her work, leaving the two children together to talk and play.

Like the little boy, the little girl was not wearing shoes and was dressed in old clothes. But she was very pretty. Her hair was golden like the windows he had seen, and her eyes were blue like the midday sky. She told the little boy about the farm, and showed him her baby cow which was black with a white star on its head. He told her about his own cow at home, which had four white feet and was red like an apple.

After they had talked and played and become friends, the little boy asked the little girl about the golden windows. She said that she knew all about them. “You have taken the wrong way,” she laughed. “Come with me to the top of the hill behind our house, and I will show you the house you are looking for.” As they walked she told him that the golden windows could only be seen as the sun goes down.

“Yes, I have known that for a long time,” said the little boy. They waited, and just as the sun was starting to go down the little girl turned and pointed. “There it is,” she said, “and one day, as soon as I am old enough, I am going to go and look for that house just like you.

There on a hill far away, stood a house with windows of gold. And when the little boy looked he saw that the house was his own home.
Then the little boy told the little girl that he could not stay longer because he had to get home before it was too late. He gave her his best stone, the white one with red lines around it that he had carried in his pocket for a year. She gave him three dried flowers that were special because she had made them herself; one yellow like the sun, one with spots, and one white like milk.

He told the little girl goodbye, and said that he was sure that he would see her again; but he did not tell her what he had learned. As he went down the hill she stood in the dying light and watched him, wishing that what he said about seeing her again would be true.

It was dark before the little boy got back to his house. But he could see the light coming through the windows, making them look just as he had seen them form the top of the far-off hill. When he opened the door, his mother came to kiss him, his little sister ran and put her arms around him, and his father looked up and smiled.

"Have you had a good day?" asked his father.

"Yes," he answered, "I have had a very good day."

"And have you learned anything?"

"Oh yes," said the little boy. "I have learned that the house we live in has windows of gold."