***The Witches***

***Chapter 2***

***My Grandmother***

***Summary:***

* Our narrator tells us that he's actually had some personal experience with witches, all before the age of eight.
* One of these encounters ended badly, and the only reason he's around to tell the frightening tale is because of his grandma. Thanks, grams.
* Now we get a little back-story on our narrator and his family: his grandma is Norwegian (Grandma means "awesome" in Norway. Not really, but it might as well.). He was born in England, where his father worked, but he loved spending time in Norway with his grandma because they had a pretty special thing going on.
* Sadly, his parents died in a car accident. He was in the car, too, but survived with just a cut. He doesn't like to talk about it.
* Narrator and grandma decided they'd stay in Norway, because grandma loved that place more than anything in the world.
* As grandmas do, our narrator's loved to tell stories. His favorites were the tales about witches, because, according to grams, they were all true, flat out true. Unfortunately, that meant that – since witches were still around – history could repeat itself.
* The narrator was a little skeptical. He's didn't quite believe in witches.
* Now that we have the history, the story begins:
* Our narrator is about seven years old. As he sits on the floor next to his grandmother's armchair, she tells him to listen carefully to her warnings about witches. All he can do after that is just pray for the best. Hmmm, that's not very reassuring.
* He's still a little skeptical. (So are we.)
* Grandmamma tells him that she knows five children who vanished because of witches. She smokes a cigar, and starts to tell the story of each child. We'll list them in a row, but keep in mind that our curious little narrator asks about a zillion questions along the way. Grandma is patient with him – although at one point she offers him a puff of her cigar, so maybe she's trying to drug him so he'll keep quiet.
  1. *Ranghild Hansen*. A tall woman with gloves lured her away, and she was never seen again.
  2. *Solveg Christiansen*. A lady gave her an apple and, the next day, she appeared in a painting in her family's house. That's right, she was *in* the painting – she'd move from place to place, and age over time, and eventually she disappeared altogether.
  3. *Birgit Svenson* (oh, Norwegian names). She turned into a chicken and laid eggs. (At this point, the narrator calls Grandmamma out on having said that all these children had vanished – turning into a chicken is not vanishing. Grandma blames her mistake on old age.)
  4. *Harald*(Roald Dahl's father's name, BTW). He turned into a stone. Now he's used as an umbrella holder, end of story.
  5. *Leif*. One day, he was swimming. When he came up for air, he was no longer a boy, but a porpoise. He played with his family for a while – he still had the voice of Leif, that's how they knew it was him – but then he swam away and was never seen again.
* In Norway, Grandmamma says, these happenings are almost expected. They're commonplace.
* This scares our narrator, who worries that he might get stolen from his bedroom at night, but his grandma reassures him that that's not how witches operate. Sweet dreams, dear narrator...

***Brief Synopsis:***

It turns out that the narrator is a man who had multiple experiences with witches as a child. The story proper now starts, bringing us to a time when the narrator is seven years old. He had been born in England but was very close to his maternal grandmother who lived in Norway. They would always visit her in Norway at Christmas and in the summertime, and the boy would spend lots of time speaking in both Norwegian and English with her. One such Christmas, the boy and his family go to visit the grandmother and, while there, his immediate family gets in a terrible car crash on an icy road. His parents both die instantly, but the boy is left almost entirely uninjured.

The boy is taken back to his grandmother's house and they stay up together crying and hugging. She tells him that he will live in Norway with her, since she could never leave. The next day, his grandmother starts to tell him stories to distract both of them from the tragedy. She begins to tell him about witches, but she makes clear that these are not made up stories like some others. When he doubts her, she tells him that she personally knows at least five children who have been taken or transformed by witches.

His grandmother lights one of her large, black cigars and tells him about the five children. The first, a child named Ranghild, was playing outside with her sister and then went off with a "tall lady in white gloves" (10) and was never seen again. The second child, from the Christiansen family, ate an apple given to her by a witch and was transported into a painting of a pasture with ducks that hung in her family's living-room; she aged year by year in the painting and eventually disappeared. The third was a little girl named Birgit who turned into a chicken and even laid big, brown eggs. The fourth was a little boy named Harald who turned into stone. The fifth, a boy named Leif, turned into a porpoise while on vacation with his family; he played with his family for the rest of the afternoon and then swam away.