

Hansel and Gretel: The Untold Story

By

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EXT. POTATO PLOT - DAY

HANSEL, an eight-year-old boy with a resolute countenance and dark, unkempt hair. He digs through the earth in his family's potato field. Finding the parched leaves of a sickly-looking plant, he follows the roots through the dusty ground with his fingertips.

A look of intensity on Hansel's face.

His hands uncover an ostensibly healthy potato about the size of a plum.

Hansel blinks.

When he grasps the potato, we hear a faint CRACK, and it crumbles into many smaller pieces, revealing that the insides of the crop resemble a piece of charcoal. Those pieces disintegrate further into dust and are swept from Hansel's open palm by a passing breeze.

Our narrator, an adult male, speaks with a sophisticated Irish accent.

OLDER HANSEL (V.O.)

Once upon a time, in autumn of my eighth year, a great famine befell the land. This is how my sad story begins.

Hansel abandons his search and begins walking in the direction of a tiny log cabin atop a meadowy hill.

OLDER HANSEL (V.O.)

My father and stepmother told us that it was the most ruthless famine they had seen in many years.

GRETEL, a seven-year-old girl with a pure, innocent face and auburn red hair running to her elbows. She draws water from a stone well.

OLDER HANSEL (V.O.)

Many other families perished, but we were persistent. Our fates were prolonged by the ever-dwindling stores of bread left over from the summer. As the late October breeze arrived, we were kept warm by the firewood my father cut.

(CONTINUED)

FATHER exits a gloomy forest into the meadow, heading for the cabin. He has an impressive red beard and wears flannel lumberjack attire. He carries a hefty bundle of wood on his back.

OLDER HANSEL (V.O.)  
Even the birds seemed to take  
notice of the famine. Their numbers  
dwindled close to the point of  
extinction.

Hansel cuts through a murder of crows, and the birds respond with irritated screeches. One crow has a diseased charcoal-potato in its beak. It flies away hastily.

OLDER HANSEL (V.O.)  
For those keeping track, that flock  
of crows is the first of three  
murders in my story.

INT. LOG CABIN - NIGHT

Hansel, Gretel, and Father gather around a wooden table.

STEPMOTHER, a bony woman no more than five feet tall, stands in the kitchen. She opens a pantry and peers in, displeased with what she sees: two round rolls remain on the vacant shelf. She removes one.

All characters speak with unrefined Irish accents.

FATHER  
Well THIS man is banjaxed,  
knackered, and hungry as a mule. I  
could eat a baby through the bars  
of a cot! What says you, Hansel?

HANSEL  
I could eat the lamb o' Jaysus  
through the rungs of a chair!

GRETEL  
I'd eat a farmer's arse through a  
blackthorn bush!

The three erupt with laughter. Stepmother delivers a plate with ONE LOWLY ROLL to the table. The laughter ceases as the family looks at the plate.

FATHER  
Have we any potatoes, love?

(CONTINUED)

STEPMOTHER

Nigh, tonight we have bread. Hansel  
says the plot's dried up.

FATHER

Dried up?!  
(beat)  
All of it?

Father looks to Hansel for confirmation.

HANSEL

Unless you fancy eating charcoal.

FATHER

Aye, bread it is then.

Father slices the bread into sections, and four hands each  
take a piece.

INT. ADULTS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

Father and Stepmother sit upright in their bed, the room  
dimly lit by candlelight.

FATHER

Can't say I'm gobsmacked to hear  
it, either. Potaters are scarce as  
hen's teeth these days.

STEPMOTHER

But that's not the end of it.  
There's only one loaf left in the  
pantry. That's not even enough for  
the two of us. It will never feed  
four mouths. I see only one thing  
left for us to do. We must lead the  
young ones deep into the forest and  
be rid of them for good.

FATHER

I'd sooner eat the beard from me  
face! They're just a couple of  
sprogs, no more than eight years  
each!

STEPMOTHER

Keep your cacks on and listen here!  
Forty years past, me own folks had  
to endure a famine akin to the one  
which haunts us now. Me father was  
a loving man like yerself. But he

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

STEPMOTHER (cont'd)  
refused to make the sacrifices that  
were necessary in times of great  
hardship. And me family, me  
sisters, me brothers, me mother,  
and even me father, all perished  
because of it... I was the only one  
to survive. If we don't leave  
Hansel and Gretel in the forest,  
you may as well start cutting the  
wood fer our coffins.

We travel through the door's keyhole to find Hansel and  
Gretel perched outside in their woolen pajamas, with their  
ears to the door. A look of horror is on Gretel's face.

Back in the bedroom, Father is pensive, clearly conflicted.

FATHER  
Coffins it is then. And that's the  
last I want to hear of it.

Stepmother turns to leave in an exasperated huff.

OLDER HANSEL (V.O.)  
As we would soon come to discover,  
my father's wishes were not  
well-received by my stepmother.

Hansel and Gretel bolt away from the door as it opens.  
Stepmother sees that they were listening, and she approaches  
them menacingly as they cower backwards into their own  
bedroom, Gretel taking shelter behind Hansel.

STEPMOTHER  
Bold of you two to still be awake.  
It's awfully late for a couple of  
young sprogs likes yerself,  
especially with such a long journey  
ahead of us tomorrow, just the  
three of us.

The children are now in eachother's embrace. Gretel looks to  
Hansel to gauge his reaction.

Stepmother SLAMS the door with gusto and bolts it, locking  
the children in their bedroom.

EXT. POTATO PLOT - NIGHT

A full moon illuminates the tranquil meadow, punctuated by cricket chirps. We see a crow picking at the dead carcass of another crow.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

The trees are colossal, towering over the brambles and boulders which inhabit the forest floor. Hansel slinks through the woods, holding his sister's hand. Stepmother leads from ten yards ahead, wielding a threatening axe.

HANSEL

But why isn't father coming with us?

STEPMOTHER

(without looking)

We are simply gathering firewood.  
No need to wake the old man.

GRETEL

(to Hansel)

Surely it will be the end of us--

Hansel cups her mouth with his hand.

HANSEL

(hushed tone)

Whisht, Gretel! Take your mind off it and trust your brother. I'll think of something.

He pauses at a decaying tree stump and gazes back. Through an opening in the thicket, we can just spot the cabin a half mile away.

Hansel removes a BREAD ROLL from his pocket. He breaks off a tiny crumb, drops it on the ground subtly, and continues onward.

STEPMOTHER (O.S.)

Quit foostering around you sluggards! We have a long way to travel yet!

EXT. FOREST - DAY - HOURS LATER

Hansel and Gretel gather around a makeshift campfire.

STEPMOTHER

Plant yerselves here. I'll fetch  
the wood. Make yerselves useful and  
tend to the fire. I want to see it  
still burning when I come back.

Stepmother slings the axe over her shoulder and marches off into the forest, pausing once to look at Hansel and Gretel one last time.

Hansel removes a WOODEN FLUTE from his pocket and begins playing a SOOTHING SONG that continues through the scene.

BEGIN MONTAGE

-From behind a tree, deep in the forest, we see Hansel and Gretel sitting by the campfire.

-Hansel explains something about his flute to Gretel, then demonstrates, but we do not hear what he says.

-A few crows fly overhead. One CAWS.

-Hansel puts a log on the fire.

-A crow lands on the ground near Gretel, who recoils. Hansel reaches across his sister's lap to shoo the bird away.

-RAIN starts to pour down on their little encampment.

-Hansel stops playing his flute. The SOOTHING SONG ends.

END MONTAGE

EXT. FOREST - DAY

The campfire has reduced to a pile of glowing embers masked by steam.

GRETEL

Hansel we were supposed to keep the  
fire burning for Stepmother!

HANSEL

(soberly)

Stepmother is not coming, Gretel.

Gretel's looks at the fire for a beat, then admits:

GRETEL

I know.

(CONTINUED)

HANSEL

We will find our own way back home.  
This way.

Gretel follows Hansel into the forest. We see a soggy breadcrumb on the ground.

HANSEL

I left a trail of breadcrumbs. We  
will follow them all the way--

A crow picks up the last breadcrumb in sight and flies away.

HANSEL

...home.

Hansel and Gretel continue timidly into the forest, hands joined.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Hansel helps Gretel over massive fallen tree.

OLDER HANSEL (V.O.)

Hours passed and we saw not one  
familiar tree in the forest. We  
were so famished we would have  
eaten the breadcrumbs from the  
ground if the crows hadn't beaten  
us to it.

The rain suddenly stops. In a clearing of trees, highlighted by a heavenly beam of sunlight, is a candy cottage.

OLDER HANSEL (V.O.)

But then, before our very eyes  
stood a cottage built of  
gingerbread and cakes with window  
panes of clear sugar. The roof was  
made of licorice shingles and a  
candy cane chimney. We couldn't  
help ourselves from feasting on the  
banquet before us.

The children frolic with glee towards the cottage. Gretel starts licking a window and Hansel takes a bite of the gumdrop doorknob.

OLDER HANSEL (V.O.)

But then we heard a peculiar voice  
coming from inside the cottage.

(CONTINUED)



OLD LADY (O.S.)  
Nibble, nibble, gnaw! Who is  
nibbling at my little house?

The children exchange alarmed looks.

HANSEL AND GRETEL  
(in unison)  
The wind, the wind, The heaven-born  
wind!

OLDER HANSEL (V.O.)  
But our charming response did not  
fool the old lady. She knew that  
our poetic harmony was not what the  
wind really sounds like.

The door to the cabin creaks open to reveal an emaciated old  
hag with a hunchback and a set of lifeless eyes.

OLD LADY  
I am Madame Connolly. How terribly  
hungry you poor children must be if  
you are eating the walls of my  
little house. Please come in and  
find yourself some bread and a nice  
warm bed.  
(smiling wryly)  
Unless you really are the  
"heaven-born wind..."

Madame Connolly withdraws back into the house without  
waiting for a response. The children hesitate, look at each  
other, and then Hansel leads Gretel through the door.

INT. CANDY COTTAGE - DAY

Gretel awakes calmly but is soon met with confusion. She  
lies on the dirty kitchen floor.

As she goes to stand, we hear a CLINK. An IRON SHACKLE is  
fastened securely around Gretel's right ankle, and her  
panicked struggling does nothing to free her.

EXT. GARDEN - DAY

Madame Connolly makes her way through a flower garden  
holding a CORNUCOPIA of bread and fruit. At the end of the  
garden is an iron cage the size of an outhouse. Inside the  
cage, Hansel squats with his back to us. Madame Connolly  
raps on the bars with her knuckles.

(CONTINUED)

OLDER HANSEL (V.O.)  
Insanity had driven the old lady to  
cannibalism, and like an ignorant  
fool I had led my sister to her  
doorstep.

MADAME CONNELLY  
Up, boy! Stretch out your finger so  
I may feel it.

Hansel pokes his wooden flute through the bars of the cage.  
The old lady feels the shaft of the instrument and scoffs.

MADAME CONNELLY  
Oh dear, thin as a bone. This won't  
do at all now, will it? Let's see  
if we can't remedy your  
malnutrition, hmm?

She pushes the cornucopia into the cell.

OLDER HANSEL (V.O.)  
Fortunately Madame Connelly's  
vision was atrocious. In hindsight,  
I speculate that she had developed  
cataracts in her old age. It WOULD  
explain a lot...

EXT. GARDEN - DAY - TWO WEEKS LATER

SUPER: "Two Weeks Later"

The candy cottage, its pristine sugar crystals sparkling.

On the floor of Hansel's cage is an empty cornucopia.

Madame Connelly raps on the cage again.

MADAME CONNELLY  
Finger!

Hansel pokes his flute through the bars to be inspected  
again.

MADAME CONNELLY  
You bowsie little snapper! You  
haven't gained a gram! Well I'm  
through waiting. You're going in  
the oven, be you fat or lean!

As Madame Connelly leaves the garden, a CROW flies down and  
perches itself on the bars of the cage. It has a diseased  
potato in its beak. Hansel looks at the bird curiously.

INT. CANDY COTTAGE - DAY

The old lady charges into the kitchen.

MADAME CONNELLY  
Gretel! Tell me if the oven is  
ready for baking.

GRETEL  
But how, Madame?

MADAME CONNELLY  
Open the door, you blundering dolt.

GRETEL  
Sorry Madame, but I don't  
understand.

MADAME CONNELLY  
(irritated)  
You're as useless as a chocolate  
teapot! Like this!

Madame Connelly demonstrates by opening the oven door and  
sticking her hand inside.

Gretel immediately propels Madame Connelly into the oven  
with a vicious push kick, using her shackled leg. She bolts  
the oven door closed, trapping the old lady inside. Her  
screaming persists as the narrator speaks.

OLDER HANSEL (V.O.)  
Gretel, my dearest sister Gretel...  
She slay the poor old lady without  
a moment's hesitation. The spirit  
of survival overtook her, blinded  
her. And as the flames engulfed  
Madame Connelly, she released a  
harrowing shriek with enough force  
to wake the trees.

Gretel exits the house slowly with a blank face, holding a  
ring of iron keys.

OLDER HANSEL (V.O.)  
The Gretel who left that house was  
not the Gretel whose hand I held  
weeks before. I looked upon a girl  
whose innocence had been stripped  
from her, a girl whose hollow eyes  
suggested they saw a ghoul rise  
from that lady's burning corpse.

(CONTINUED)

She unlocks Hansel's cage without a word. Hansel wraps his arms around his unresponsive sister.

HANSEL  
Let's go home Gretel.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Hansel walks with his arm around Gretel. A half dozen crows fly amongst the canopy above.

OLDER HANSEL (V.O.)  
We did what we should have done a long time ago. We followed the birds. They led us home that very same day.

EXT. LOG CABIN - DAY

Standing outside the family's home, the children reunite with their father. Hansel hugs the man, who is overjoyed.

An adult-sized coffin is propped against the cabin's wall with an axe leaning next to it. Father follows Hansel's gaze to the wooden box.

FATHER  
Don't worry yourself about that old box, lad. It ain't for any of us.

Gretel hugs her father, tears streaming down the man's face.

OLDER HANSEL (V.O.)  
As Father embraced my dear sister, it occurred to me that cold-blooded murder was now something the two had in common.

Father leads Hansel and Gretel into the cabin. A crow swoops in and lands on the coffin.

EXT. CANDY COTTAGE - DAY

Hansel presents the magnificent candy cottage to Father. The two race to the cottage and begin nibbling on its walls.

Gretel watches from a distance. A slight smile can be detected on her face.

(CONTINUED)

OLDER HANSEL (V.O.)

Gretel left our family shortly after her sixteenth birthday. That was the last I saw of her. She didn't say where she was going or what she was looking for, but I knew. She was searching for a happily-ever-after which had evaporated long ago, with the ashes of Madame Connelly.

THE END