

OPEN TO INTERPRETATION

A Ten-Minute Comedy Duet

by
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CAST: HANSEL and GRETEL

HANSEL: Hansel!

GRETEL: And Gretel!

HANSEL: A children's story! Or so it seems on the surface. But underneath...the implications are...

GRETEL: They are mind-boggling.

HANSEL: Stupefying.

GRETEL: And definitely...

HANSEL & GRETEL: Open to interpretation!

GRETEL: **(as they become two little children)** Oh, Hansel! What a lovely day!

HANSEL: Yes, except for the fact that our mother died, our father re-married a very wicked woman who claims we eat too much, and thus sends dear Daddy out in the woods to leave us to starve. Other than that, it's a perfect day.

GRETEL: But look, Hansel! I have brought this handful of breadcrumbs, which I have been dropping, thus assuring us that we can find our way back.

HANSEL: You are truly a wonderful sister.

GRETEL: Thanks.

HANSEL: Unfortunately, you're not a very smart sister. Look. The birds have eaten all of your bread.

GRETEL: Oh, crumb!

HANSEL: But look! There's a house made of candy! Let's eat that!

GRETEL: Before dinner?

HANSEL: We're the victims of neglect; we can do as we wish.

GRETEL: You're right. **(they begin to eat, when suddenly)** Look, Hansel! A wicked witch! She's tying you up! She's throwing you in a cage to fatten you! And she's nearly blind!

HANSEL: **(now in the cage, hanging on to the bars)** Never fear, Gretel! Each day I shall stick this chicken bone out of the cage when she comes to feel my finger. She says she shall throw me into the oven when I get fat enough, but I have fooled her!

GRETEL: Oh, Hansel! Now she wants me to stick my head into the oven to see if it is hot enough! I shall ask her to stick her head in, Hansel!

HANSEL: Good thinking, Gretel!

GRETEL: **(tosses in the witch)** Aoommph! There! She is dead!

HANSEL: End of story!

GRETEL: Hurray!

HANSEL: But! Since it's also a rather dull story...

GRETEL: And we are still five minutes away from our time minimum...

HANSEL: Let us suppose this untidy little tale was a murder mystery! **(both hum the "Dagnet" theme as they get into position) (ala Jack Webb)** It was a cool Friday in the forest. I was working day watch out of Homicide Division. My name is Hansel. I'm a cop. **(crossing to GRETEL, deadpan)** Name?

GRETEL: Gretel.

HANSEL: Who's the dead broad?

GRETEL: A witch.

HANSEL: Witch?

GRETEL: Witch.

HANSEL: Great. How'd she die?

GRETEL: I killed her.

HANSEL: With what?

GRETEL: An oven.

HANSEL: You hit her with an oven?

GRETEL: I shoved her in. I cooked her.

HANSEL: Great. Another 9-34. That's the third "witch cooking" I've had this week.

GRETEL: This ain't no copycat crime, officer. It was my own idea. She deserved it.

HANSEL: Most witches do. Got any witnesses?

GRETEL: My brother Hansel over there. The one holding the chicken bone.

HANSEL: He do that often?

GRETEL: Sort of a hobby.

HANSEL: I'll have to take you down to the station.

GRETEL: Whatever you say.

HANSEL: **(pulling imaginary handcuffs out of his pocket)** These bread crumbs yours? We found 'em in the forest.

GRETEL: Oh great.

HANSEL: **(to the audience)** But! How would Shakespeare have dealt with this?

GRETEL: Hansel! Hansel! My dear Hansel! Why art thou so downcast?

HANSEL: **(behind bars)** Oh, Gretel! Dearest of sisters! 'Tis the wicked witch that hath entombed me! Looketh! Even now she doth come to check my finger!

GRETEL: Oh, most wretched of women! Oh, I shalt give thee more than double thy toil and trouble! Oh, thou most...

HANSEL: Oh, get off it! She wants to cook me! Hark! Even now she bendeth over to check her cauldron! Listen to it boil,

Gretel! Do not ask for whom it boils... It boils for me! Quick! Do the deed! Now, while she turneth but away a bit.

GRETEL: **(begins to shove her, then stops to think)** To shove, or not to shove... That is the question...

HANSEL: Shovest thou! Please shovest!

GRETEL: Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer the gripes and groans of yon whining brother...

HANSEL: Oh, shovest thou, quick! For even now she turns to...

(And the imaginary witch drags HANSEL from the cage and toward the oven as GRETEL soliloquizes...with HANSEL making various noises in the background)

GRETEL: Hansel! Hansel! Wherefore art thou, Hansel? A rose by any other name would burn as quickly!

HANSEL: Gretel!!!!

GRETEL: Ponder I this wicked deed...for what better stuff am I than her if into the oven thither she goeth?

HANSEL: Gretel, I'm burning!

GRETEL: Burn! Burn! My conscience burns with thoughts so grieved and maddened! To push! To pull! And then alas, to shove no more!

HANSEL: I'm dead! **(and HE dies)**

GRETEL: All's well that ends well. Alas, poor Hansel, I knew him well, witch! Now lieth he as still as potash on Flanders Fields.

HANSEL: Unsatisfying to say the least! What about... Vaudeville! **(as both hum their way to side-by-side positions)** Whoa! I mean that witch is mean!

GRETEL: How mean is she?

HANSEL: You kick her in the heart, you'd break your toe!

GRETEL: That's mean!

HANSEL: That's mean! She once dated a warlock with a wooden leg.

GRETEL: What happened?

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