Scene 1

Enter Hänsel and Gretel.

Hänsel: Hallo, Alles!

Gretel: Wilkommen!

Hänsel: Allow us to introduce ourselves. This is my little sister, Gretel.

Gretel: Und this is my little brother, Hänsel. Perhaps you have heard of us.

Hänsel: But did you know that we are actually German?

Gretel: It's true! We may even switch back and forth between German and English as we go, but you needn't worry: German is a simple, romantic tongue. Very easy to learn.

Hänsel: Say, Schwester, why don't we teach our new friends some German - or *Deutsch* - along the way?

Gretel: What a good idea, Bruder! It will help us to tell our story. Und who doesn't love structured audience participation?

Hänsel: Ja genau! Ours is a story of witches—

Gretel: Und candy!

Hänsel: Und the evil of man—

Gretel: Und candy!

Hänsel: Ja-ja, und candy. Lots of candy.

Gretel: Arguably way too much *candy*…

Gretel shudders.

Hänsel: We begin our tale in the heart of Germany…

Gretel: Or, Deutschland!

Hänsel: Deep in medieval Europe…

Gretel: Europa!

Both: *In the year 1314 of our Bürgermeister…*

A change.

Hänsel: Jetzt, it is important to know that in the fourteenth century, there was a huge explosion of people in Europe.

Gretel: Not literally.

Hänsel: Nein, but one would not see that many Europeans again until the 19th century.

Gretel: Faszinierend! But what happened to them in between, Bruder?

Hänsel: They starved to death, Schwester.

Gretel: *Faszinierend.*

Hänsel: You see, farming depends on a "yield ratio," referring to the number of seeds planted versus the number that can then be harvested and eaten. Nowadays, it's about 30 to 1, meaning for every 1 seed planted, there are 30 seeds left to harvest.

But in the 14th century, it was just 2 to 1, and food prices were only getting higher.

Gretel: Well… it can't all be funny.

Buket and Helmut enter.

Gretel: Behold, our dearest mother (or Mutter), Buket.

Hansel: Und our step-father (or, Stief-Vater), Helmut.

Gretel: What a stupid name.

She spits.

Hänsel: Now, many of you may have heard that it was our step*mother* who orchestrated the crimes against us, but that is actually just what we Germans like to call:

Gretel: "*Institutionalisierte Frauenfeindlichkeit.*"

Hänsel: Or, roughly translated into English:

Gretel: "Institutionalized misogyny."

Gretel spits.

Hänsel: Ja. It was in fact all the doing of *Helmut.*

Gretel goes to spit again.

Hänsel: I think that is enough spitting.

Gretel: If you say so…

Helmut: Buket! Your children are doing that thing again!

Buket: Kommt, meine Schätzelein, away from that wall. You have three others to play with— Why is the floor so wet?

Gretel swallows and excuses herself.

Buket: Helmut darling, how was the market? Did you sell any wood?

Helmut: Who's got wood money these days, woman? Eh? And what are people going to use wood for anyway? Eh?! There's nothin' to cook! EH!

Buket: Oh dear. Well come along, Kinder, looks like it's sticks for dinner again.

She uses wooden utensils to serve pieces of wood to the kids.

Hänsel: But we had sticks yesterday!

Gretel: I want candy.

Helmut: CANDY?! What, you think there are people out there in the woods, building houses out of the stuff? Eh? Where do you imagine we'd get all this candy, eh? EH!

Gretel: Well, Step-Vater, we are glad you asked.

Hänsel: If you give us two minutes of your time, we will change everything you think you know about candy forever!

Helmut and Buket sit. Gretel and Hänsel pump themselves up and get their presentation materials ready.

Both: Has this ever happened to you?

Gretel uses two blocks of wood to emulate horse-hooves.

Hänsel: It's a beautiful German day. You are riding your horse back from the market.

Gretel: "Woah, easy horsey!"

Hänsel: But your horse is hungry. It has not had anything to eat for weeks, aside from sticks—

Helmut: Watch it…

Buket: Ssh.

Hänsel: When suddenly, your horse dies.

Gretel: Kaputt[1]. Auf Wiedersehen, horsey.

Hänsel: What do you do next?

Helmut: We eat the horse, of course.

Hänsel: Ja ja, delicious horse flesh for all! But then what do you do with the bones?

Buket: You boil them down to make horse broth.

Helmut: Obviously. C'mon, Hänsel, I haven't got all Tag.

Hänsel: Ja ja, but *then* what about the hooves?

Buket: The hooves?

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[1] Busted.

Hänsel: Exactly! Wave "Auf Wiedersehen" to wasted horse feet! Instead of throwing them in the trash, simply degrease and roast those hooves—

Gretel: Is it getting hot in here?

Hänsel: Leave them in your preferred acid or alkaline—

Gretel: There's always time for lime!

Hänsel: Boil them down—

Gretel: I've got a fever… for more horse hooves!

Hänsel: And then extract the gelatin using a tube, careful to separate whatever bone, tissues, and residual chunks are left over.

Gretel: I don't have a pun for this step, it's actually pretty gross.

Hänsel: Und voila: the continental confection, the Deutsch delicacy, the bonniest bonbon beyond Bonn…

Hänsel & Gretel: *Das Gummibär!*

Gretel: (*A slogan*) Es schmeckt *gut*[2].

Buket and Helmut blink at the children in disbelief.

Hänsel: (*Nervously*) But if, say, you don't like the bear, don't despair: we've prepared some other options for you. (*Nudging*) Gretel…

Gretel: Oh ja! (*Showing various mock-ups*) Behold, das Gummi-Fledermäus (*bat*), das Gummi-Tintenfisch (*squid*), or das Gummi-Stinktier (*skunk*)!

[2] It tastes good.

Silence.

Helmut: That's it, we're taking you kids to the middle of the forest and leaving you there.

A change.

Hänsel: Und that was that.

Gretel: Mutter Buket begged Helmut to reconsider, natürlich—

Buket: Please, not mein Mädchen und mein Bübchen[3]!

Helmut: We cannot support well-behaved children, never mind kleine Bratwürsts like these!

Buket: They were only suggesting we use the horse hooves to make candy—

Helmut: But Buket, they know *I* like to use the horse hooves!

Buket: For what—

Helmut: For GLUE!

Gretel: Alas, our poor Mutter, but what could she do? She was a woman, it was Medieval Times. I mean, if she had raised her voice towards him, he could have legally burned her at the stake.

Buket: (*To Hänsel*) Auf Wiedersehen, Hänsel. And don't be scared: your big sister will look after you.
(*To Gretel*) Tschuss, Gretel. And don't worry: your big brother will make sure you are safe.

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[3] Girl and boy, but in "Bübchen" is sort of overbearingly maternal, you know?

Gretel: Good bye, Mama. Don't cry. It was our own fault for being silly and using our imaginations. You raised us to be better Germans than that.

Hänsel: May the story of our deaths inspire millions to be quiet and eat their sticks like good children.

Helmut leads them into the woods.

Scene 2

The forest. Helmut leads the way. The kids dawdle behind.

Helmut: Hurry up.

Hänsel: Is this where you work?

Helmut: Ja ja, this is the forest.

Gretel: Do you like working in the forest?

Helmut: Sure.

Hänsel: How much do you make?

Helmut: No more talking.

Hänsel: Psst, Gretel!

Gretel: Vuh?

Hänsel: Look!

He reveals a couple pieces of bread from the depths of his lederhosen.

Gretel: Gott in Himmel! Bread! Gib's mir!

She goes to eat. Hänsel stops her.

Hänsel: Nein! Watch….

He breaks up a bit of bread and crumbles it on the path as they walk, deviously.

Hänsel: See, we can use it to demarcate our path.

Gretel: Say, just a thought… Why don't we *eat* the bread? You know, so we don't starve to death.

Hänsel: Because this way, we'll be able to find our way back home.

Gretel: Oh wunderbar! I feel like it's been years already.

Hänsel: We can still see our house through the trees.

Gretel: I can scarcely recall Mama's voice.

Hänsel: I can literally hear her crying right now.

Buket's distant sobs are heard.

Gretel: Oh poor Hänsel, no.

It gets darker.

Helmut: Alright, here we are in the middle of the forest. Now close your eyes and both of you do a little spin. (*They do*) Bit more spinning. Gut. *(They do)* Now don't open them yet— I have to get a head start back.

Gretel: (*Eyes still closed*) Please Step-Vater, don't leave us!

Hänsel: (*Eyes still closed*) We will be good! We will never beg for horse hooves again!

Helmut: It's too late. Keep those eyes closed! (*To himself*) Oh Sheiße, how am I going to get back?! I wasn't paying attention…

Gretel: If you bring us back home, I'll let you eat Hänsel.

Hänsel: Hey!

Helmut: Quiet! (*To himself*) O Gott, this is so embarrassing…

Hänsel: Please! We will never beg for candy again!

Gretel: Und we will clean our Zimmers, und Hänsel and I will stop leaving trails of breadcrumbs everywhere—

Helmut: Breadcrumbs?

Hänsel: Gretel!

Helmut: Omigott! Do these go all the way back to the house?

Gretel: Ja! I begged him to eat the bread but he wouldn't listen!

Helmut: Ha ha! So long, Lederhosers[4]!

[4] It was late.

He exits, eating breadcrumbs as he goes. A pause.

Hänsel: Step-Vater? Are you there?

He opens his eyes.

Hänsel: Open your eyes, Gretel.

Gretel: But Helmut said not to!

Hänsel: He's gone.

Gretel: Not if I don't open my eyes, he isn't! It's a paradox I just invented. If I don't open my eyes, then for all I know, he's still here! I shall name this thought experiment after our old cat, Pavlov.

Hänsel: Fine! Stand in the forest with your eyes closed forever und see if I care!

He flings himself away and pouts. Gretel opens her eyes.

Gretel: Hänsel? Are you cross with me?

Hänsel: You gave away our breadcrumb scheme.

Gretel: I panicked!

Hänsel: And worser still, you said you would let Helmut eat me.

Gretel: Oh Hänsel, I didn't mean it.

Hänsel: Ja right. You're probably just waiting for me to fall asleep so you can boil me down into delicious Gummi-Stinktiere.

Gretel is clearly thinking of exactly that, but she snaps out of it.

Gretel: Hänsel, I swear I will never let anyone eat you.

Hänsel says nothing. Gretel sings, weirdly:

Gretel: *O Hänsel, poorest of the German kids,*
Dry away those sad, little eyelids:
Gretel hates to see you feel crummy.

O my darling Hänsel, wipe them tears up,
Never on your child flesh shall man sup:
Gretel would rip you from Satan's tummy.

The song just kind of ends. Hänsel regards her.

Hänsel: That was an odd song, Gretel.

Gretel: Dankeschön, Hänsel!
nsel and Gretel.

Hänsel: Hallo, Alles!

Gretel: Wilkommen!

Both: Dankeschön, Grampa Storyman!

Grampa: (*Already leaving/not paying attention*) What? Oh yeah, no worries…

Hänsel: Allow us to introduce ourselves. This is my little sister, Gretel.

Gretel: Und this is my little brother, Hänsel. Perhaps you have heard of us.

Hänsel: But did you know that we are actually German?

Gretel: It's true! We may even switch back and forth between German and English as we go, but you needn't worry: German is a simple, romantic tongue. Very easy to learn.

Hänsel: Say, Schwester, why don't we teach our new friends some German - or *Deutsch* - along the way?

Gretel: What a good idea, Bruder! It will help us to tell our story. Und who doesn't love structured audience participation?

Hänsel: Ja genau! Ours is a story of witches—

Gretel: Und candy!

Hänsel: Und the evil of man—

Gretel: Und candy!

Hänsel: Ja-ja, und candy. Lots of candy.

Gretel: Arguably way too much *candy*…

Gretel shudders.

Hänsel: We begin our tale in the heart of Germany…

Gretel: Or, Deutschland!

Hänsel: Deep in medieval Europe…

Gretel: Europa!

Both: *In the year 1314 of our Bürgermeister…*

A change.

Hänsel: Jetzt, it is important to know that in the fourteenth century, there was a huge explosion of people in Europe.

Gretel: Not literally.

Hänsel: Nein, but one would not see that many Europeans again until the 19th century.

Gretel: Faszinierend! But what happened to them in between, Bruder?

Hänsel: They starved to death, Schwester.

Gretel: *Faszinierend.*

Hänsel: You see, farming depends on a "yield ratio," referring to the number of seeds planted versus the number that can then be harvested and eaten. Nowadays, it's about 30 to 1, meaning for every 1 seed planted, there are 30 seeds left to harvest. But in the 14th century, it was just 2 to 1, and food prices were only getting higher.

Gretel: Well… it can't all be funny.

Buket and Helmut enter.

Gretel: Behold, our dearest mother (or Mutter), Buket.

Hansel: Und our step-father (or, Stief-Vater), Helmut.

Gretel: What a stupid name.

She spits.

Hänsel: Now, many of you may have heard that it was our step*mother* who orchestrated the crimes against us, but that is actually just what we Germans like to call:

Gretel: "*Institutionalisierte Frauenfeindlichkeit.*"

Hänsel: Or, roughly translated into English:

Gretel: "Institutionalized misogyny."

Gretel spits.

Hänsel: Ja. It was in fact all the doing of *Helmut.*

Gretel goes to spit again.

Hänsel: I think that is enough spitting.

Gretel: If you say so…

Helmut: Buket! Your children are doing that thing again!

Buket: Kommt, meine Schätzelein, away from that wall. You have three others to play with— Why is the floor so wet?

Gretel swallows and excuses herself.

Buket: Helmut darling, how was the market? Did you sell any wood?

Helmut: Who's got wood money these days, woman? Eh? And what are people going to use wood for anyway? Eh?! There's nothin' to cook! EH!

Buket: Oh dear. Well come along, Kinder, looks like it's sticks for dinner again.

She uses wooden utensils to serve pieces of wood to the kids.

Hänsel: But we had sticks yesterday!

Gretel: I want candy.

Helmut: CANDY?! What, you think there are people out there in the woods, building houses out of the stuff? Eh? Where do you imagine we'd get all this candy, eh? EH!

Gretel: Well, Step-Vater, we are glad you asked.

Hänsel: If you give us two minutes of your time, we will change everything you think you know about candy forever!

Helmut and Buket sit. Gretel and Hänsel pump themselves up and get their presentation materials ready.

Both: Has this ever happened to you?

Gretel uses two blocks of wood to emulate horse-hooves.

Hänsel: It's a beautiful German day. You are riding your horse back from the market.

Gretel: "Woah, easy horsey!"

Hänsel: But your horse is hungry. It has not had anything to eat for weeks, aside from sticks—

Helmut: Watch it…

Buket: Ssh.

Hänsel: When suddenly, your horse dies.

Gretel: Kaputt[5]. Auf Wiedersehen, horsey.

Hänsel: What do you do next?

Helmut: We eat the horse, of course.

Hänsel: Ja ja, delicious horse flesh for all! But then what do you do with the bones?

Buket: You boil them down to make horse broth.

Helmut: Obviously. C'mon, Hänsel, I haven't got all Tag.

Hänsel: Ja ja, but *then* what about the hooves?

Buket: The hooves?

Hänsel: Exactly! Wave "Auf Wiedersehen" to wasted horse feet! Instead of throwing them in the trash, simply degrease and roast those hooves—

Gretel: Is it getting hot in here?

Hänsel: Leave them in your preferred acid or alkaline—

Gretel: There's always time for lime!

Hänsel: Boil them down—

Gretel: I've got a fever… for more horse hooves!

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[5] Busted.

Hänsel: And then extract the gelatin using a tube, careful to separate whatever bone, tissues, and residual chunks are left over.

Gretel: I don't have a pun for this step, it's actually pretty gross.

Hänsel: Und voila: the continental confection, the Deutsch delicacy, the bonniest bonbon beyond Bonn…

Hänsel & Gretel: *Das Gummibär!*

Gretel: (*A slogan*) Es schmeckt *gut*[6].

Buket and Helmut blink at the children in disbelief.

Hänsel: (*Nervously*) But if, say, you don't like the bear, don't despair: we've prepared some other options for you. (*Nudging*) Gretel…

Gretel: Oh ja! (*Showing various mock-ups*) Behold, das Gummi-Fledermäus (*bat*), das Gummi-Tintenfisch (*squid*), or das Gummi-Stinktier (*skunk*)!

Silence.

Helmut: That's it, we're taking you kids to the middle of the forest and leaving you there.

A change.

Hänsel: Und that was that.

Gretel: Mutter Buket begged Helmut to reconsider, natürlich—

[6] It tastes good.

Buket: Please, not mein Mädchen und mein Bübchen[7]!

Helmut: We cannot support well-behaved children, never mind kleine Bratwürsts like these!

Buket: They were only suggesting we use the horse hooves to make candy—

Helmut: But Buket, they know *I* like to use the horse hooves!

Buket: For what—

Helmut: For GLUE!

Gretel: Alas, our poor Mutter, but what could she do? She was a woman, it was Medieval Times. I mean, if she had raised her voice towards him, he could have legally burned her at the stake.

Buket: (*To Hänsel*) Auf Wiedersehen, Hänsel. And don't be scared: your big sister will look after you.
(*To Gretel*) Tschuss, Gretel. And don't worry: your big brother will make sure you are safe.

Gretel: Good bye, Mama. Don't cry. It was our own fault for being silly and using our imaginations. You raised us to be better Germans than that.

Hänsel: May the story of our deaths inspire millions to be quiet and eat their sticks like good children.

Helmut leads them into the woods.

Scene 2

[7] Girl and boy, but in "Bübchen" is sort of overbearingly maternal, you know?

The forest. Helmut leads the way. The kids dawdle behind.

Helmut: Hurry up.

Hänsel: Is this where you work?

Helmut: Ja ja, this is the forest.

Gretel: Do you like working in the forest?

Helmut: Sure.

Hänsel: How much do you make?

Helmut: No more talking.

Hänsel: Psst, Gretel!

Gretel: Vuh?

Hänsel: Look!

He reveals a couple pieces of bread from the depths of his lederhosen.

Gretel: Gott in Himmel! Bread! Gib's mir!

She goes to eat. Hänsel stops her.

Hänsel: Nein! Watch….

He breaks up a bit of bread and crumbles it on the path as they walk, deviously.

Hänsel: See, we can use it to demarcate our path.

Gretel: Say, just a thought… Why don't we *eat* the bread? You know, so we don't starve to death.

Hänsel: Because this way, we'll be able to find our way back home.

Gretel: Oh wunderbar! I feel like it's been years already.

Hänsel: We can still see our house through the trees.

Gretel: I can scarcely recall Mama's voice.

Hänsel: I can literally hear her crying right now.

Buket's distant sobs are heard.

Gretel: Oh poor Hänsel, no.

It gets darker.

Helmut: Alright, here we are in the middle of the forest. Now close your eyes and both of you do a little spin. (*They do*) Bit more spinning. Gut. *(They do)* Now don't open them yet— I have to get a head start back.

Gretel: (*Eyes still closed*) Please Step-Vater, don't leave us!

Hänsel: (*Eyes still closed*) We will be good! We will never beg for horse hooves again!

Helmut: It's too late. Keep those eyes closed! (*To himself*) Oh Sheiße, how am I going to get back?! I wasn't paying attention…

Gretel: If you bring us back home, I'll let you eat Hänsel.

Hänsel: Hey!

Helmut: Quiet! (*To himself*) O Gott, this is so embarrassing…

Hänsel: Please! We will never beg for candy again!

Gretel: Und we will clean our Zimmers, und Hänsel and I will stop leaving trails of breadcrumbs everywhere—

Helmut: Breadcrumbs?

Hänsel: Gretel!

Helmut: Omigott! Do these go all the way back to the house?

Gretel: Ja! I begged him to eat the bread but he wouldn't listen!

Helmut: Ha ha! So long, Lederhosers[8]!

He exits, eating breadcrumbs as he goes. A pause.

Hänsel: Step-Vater? Are you there?

He opens his eyes.

Hänsel: Open your eyes, Gretel.

Gretel: But Helmut said not to!

Hänsel: He's gone.

[8] It was late.

Gretel: Not if I don't open my eyes, he isn't! It's a paradox I just invented. If I don't open my eyes, then for all I know, he's still here! I shall name this thought experiment after our old cat, Pavlov.

Hänsel: Fine! Stand in the forest with your eyes closed forever und see if I care!

He flings himself away and pouts. Gretel opens her eyes.

Gretel: Hänsel? Are you cross with me?

Hänsel: You gave away our breadcrumb scheme.

Gretel: I panicked!

Hänsel: And worser still, you said you would let Helmut eat me.

Gretel: Oh Hänsel, I didn't mean it.

Hänsel: Ja right. You're probably just waiting for me to fall asleep so you can boil me down into delicious Gummi-Stinktiere.

Gretel is clearly thinking of exactly that, but she snaps out of it.

Gretel: Hänsel, I swear I will never let anyone eat you.

Hänsel says nothing. Gretel sings, weirdly:

Gretel: *O Hänsel, poorest of the German kids,*
Dry away those sad, little eyelids:
Gretel hates to see you feel crummy.

O my darling Hänsel, wipe them tears up,

Never on your child flesh shall man sup:
Gretel would rip you from Satan's tummy.

The song just kind of ends. Hänsel regards her.

Hänsel: That was an odd song, Gretel.

Gretel: Dankeschön, Hänsel!