

A Fairy Tale, Indeed

I represent the family of Mary Hecate, deceased, victim of Hansel and Gretel. Everyone knows their version of the story; it's a classic tale of goodness triumphant over evil. So when the Hecates first approached me (on foot, not broom), saying nobody else would take their case, I, too, was skeptical. Not any more. My investigative agency has uncovered an entirely different story that, in a court of law, will prove the original to be a tale only a fairy could tell.

We are asked to believe the father is a poor woodcutter. In reality, he owns vast expanses of Rhineland timber. He inherited a fortune when his first wife, Hansel and Gretel's mother, died under mysterious circumstances. His second wife, the cruel stepmother, became bitter over her husband's refusal to keep money in their German forest house while his Swiss bank accounts grew like sequoias. She, too, we learn in the original story, died under mysterious circumstances. He also twice took part in the attempted murder of his children, abandoning them in the cold woods with virtually no food (one slice of bread), and no water or proper clothing. We might add charges of child abuse and reckless endangerment; my associates are already preparing the briefs.

As for Hansel and Gretel, they're not the innocents everyone has assumed. Allegedly driven by hunger, they claim to have seen a house made of bread, cake, and sugar. In point of fact, Mary Hecate's house is wood, tarpaper, and glass. She became terrified when the two started eating their way in. Those weren't berries we are told they ate moments

before seeing the house. Our investigators discovered something called "shrooms," an hallucinogenic fungus which grows in profusion throughout the forest. Hansel and Gretel killed Mary in a drug-induced frenzy, then took her Certificates of Deposit, bank notes, and Christmas Club cash back to their father, certain of being accepted with open arms.

I have instructed the Hecate family to await the completion of our investigation; we are learning more every day. The father again abandoned his children. This time he took all the booty and absconded to the Brazilian rainforest, where he now lives incognito with his fourth wife (his third died under mysterious circumstances). As soon as our agents find a dwelling known as the "penthouse among the trees," he will be indicted on one count of receiving stolen property and at least two counts of attempted murder. Hansel and Gretel, still together and co-dependent, made their way out of the forest but wound up in a detention center for eating the shingles off a youth hostel in Dusseldorf. They will be released in about six months; that is, if officials can figure out a way to prevent the two from chomping their way back in.