

HANSEL & GRETEL

CHARACTERS

Hansel: A resourceful 11-year-old, Hansel is very goal-oriented. He always tries to do ‘the right thing.’ Since his mother’s death and his father’s frequent trips into the forest, he feels quite responsible for his sister, Gretel. And when it comes to play... well, he doesn’t. His horn-rimmed glasses and every present calculator are not affectations, they’re the real Hansel! He sees himself as an adult, and he pretty much behaves like one. And his sense of humor is pretty much nonexistent, though he does play the occasional trick on Gretel. He loves his dad and never wants to let him down, so although he puts up with Keesia, his governess-soon-to-be stepmother, for his father’s sake, he knows she can’t be trusted.

Gretel: A playful 10-year-old, Gretel likes to turn cartwheels and sing. School interests her not at all— that’s Hansel’s thing. She likes to play jokes on everyone and thinks rules are there to be broken. She laughs all the time and considers her brother a geek for always being so studious and stern. She misses her mother terribly but tries not to let her father see that. She would do anything for her dad, but if he goes forward with his plan to marry Keesia— well, she won’t let that happen. She’ll find some way to show him what a snake their governess really is.

Witch: An ancient, crotchety, nearly blind, horrifically ugly woman, she’d frighten her own mother. Of course her mother, dead many years now, wouldn’t recognize her beautiful dark-haired daughter. Because ***Mirana*** was changed into a witch by her evil brother, then Prince, now King Griffin, who relegated her to living alone in the woods, with just her two pets, Regina and Bertram, for company. Though only 28, the former princess looks 82 as the witch. But being the witch has taught her some things: compassion most of all. And she knows that if she had wrenched control of the kingdom from her brother, she would probably have become as callous a queen as he is a king. Most of all, being alone has taught her the importance of love— something she knows she’ll never have but dreams of nonetheless. After all, witches too have dreams.

Griffin: Bore bore bore— life’s a bore, the people around him are bores. I mean, sure, he’s king, but even his kingdom’s boring. And besides, other people see to the running of it, so there’s nothing for him to do there. He’s the most powerful man in the land, he can have anything he wants, but what is there to want? He already owns everything of interest. He has inventors working around the clock to come up with things to amuse him, and sometimes they succeed, but not for long. Sometimes he dreams of the days when he was fighting with his sister, Princess Mirana, for control of the kingdom. Of course, he absolutely is glad he banished his sister to her life as a lonely old witch— he cackles with glee just thinking of it— but at least when Mirana was around, she was never boring. A royal pain, but never boring.

Regina: As in ‘Victoria Regina’ because as Princess Mirana’s pet, she is truly the queen of all cats. She has a long, luxurious coat, white with regal black markings, and haughty blue eyes. She is fast of foot, fastidious to a fault, arches her back with elegance and style, pounces with grace, and has an imperious personality from her pretty pink nose to the tip of her expressive tail. So when she is turned, by King Griffin’s spell, into a pig... her majesty Regina is not amused. She becomes a big, ugly, dirty pig— white with black markings, but her face is sort of half pig/half cat— a weird combination. Her voice (think RENEE ZELLWEGER) fit her to a ‘T’ as a pampered cat, but as a pig... the soft, lilting voice seems incongruous, and earns her zero respect with the other animals in the forest. And going from her lithe, beautiful body to this heavy, hulking shell— well, let’s just say pouncing is a whole new ball game.

Bertram: Princess Mirana’s other pet is this staid, perfect specimen of an English bulldog. A reddish brown color with distinctive facial markings, he’s good at four things: eating, drooling, snoring and farting. He growls at the poor knave whose job it is to walk him— movement is not Bertram’s idea of a good time— and he is particularly snippy with King Griffin, who is so annoyed at this lazy dog, that when he casts his spell on Bertram, he changes him into a butterfly. This means he has to fly all day from flower to flower just to get food enough to survive. His days of laying around are but a fond memory, because if he snuggles up on the hearth these days, there’s a good chance he’ll get stepped on. And his voice (think KELSEY GRAMMAR) fit Bertram the bulldog, but makes Bertram the butterfly sound like... a cross-dresser or something. And on top of everything, King Griffin made sure that as a butterfly, Bertram retained the face of a bulldog, so this formerly feared and revered palace pet is now an object of ridicule, even to his fellow butterflies.

Keesia: Life is inherently unfair. If it was fair, she’d be queen. She’s beautiful— blonde hair, green eyes, flawless skin— and has exquisite taste. What more is there? Plus she has powers. Oh nothing earthshattering— she can’t turn lead into gold, alas— but she can see things sometimes... see into people and what they want, and then pretend to give it to them. That is, of course, if they have something *she* wants. She became the governess of Tomas’s two brats when it looked like he was coming up in the world. He had the contract to supply furniture to the king, after all! But in his brooding over the death of his wife, he lost the contract— so now he’s but a poor woodsman, growing poorer by the minute it would seem. Maybe with his children out of the way, she can make him into something again. But if not, she’ll have to cut her losses. After all, she’ll be 30 next year!

Tomas: Tomas would agree with Keesia that life is unfair. Until his wife died a year ago, he had the perfect life. But since then, life has seemed barely worth living. If it were not for Hansel and Gretel, he would no doubt have given up long ago. And Keesia has been a godsend, agreeing to be the governess for his kids when his wife died. He reluctantly agreed to become engaged— not out of love for her, which he has told her, but out of gratitude. And besides, love is something from his past, not his future. And the children need someone. He loves carving furniture but, truthfully, his heart has not even been in that these days. He hopes for the best, because he wants to do right by his kids, but worries that he will let them down.

TREATMENT

1. IN VOICEOVER, AS SCENES BEING DESCRIBED UNFOLD

“There once was a kingdom with a king who lived in splendor while his people starved.”

“Parents, so distraught at their inability to provide their children with even the smallest morsel of food, left them at orphanages, where they would at least be fed. And when children went missing from the orphanages, well, the caretakers didn’t do much to search for them as there were always so many still to care for.”

“Had the orphanage overseers had time to give it some thought, they might have realized that children always went missing while on a nature walk. The orphanage often led groups of children into the woods, not just for exercise and play, but to gather mushrooms and berries to enhance their meager dinners; to pick wildflowers to brighten their dreary dormitories.”

“The children were gleeful on these excursions and would dash about, as children are wont to do, and that was when she struck.”

2. END VOICEOVER, DEEP IN THE FOREST - DAY

SEE THE WITCH, old, warty, yucky, directing a butterfly, BERTRAM, to fly and bring back a child or two. Bertram, seemingly annoyed at merely having to move, starts to fly. Watching jealously as Bertram lifts himself into the air, and complaining that they’re *again* going to have children around the place, is REGINA, the pig. Regina and Bertram argue as to who has the tougher life as Bertram circles above. Regina complains about the squalor she’s forced to endure, she has to live in a pen of dirt and she *hates* this hulking body that eats everything in sight—no taste, no refinement. “And your tail is ridiculous!” Bertram chimes in. “At least I have one!” Regina retorts. To which Bertram scowls and flies off. The witch sighs and turns to her pouting pig—“It’s not my fault that you live in a pen and don’t like tuna anymore. You’re a pig. Get over it.”

On Bertram’s expedition, he spots a couple of GIRLS straying from the group in the woods and hears them plotting to run away. Bertram ensnares them with offers of “candy” — and the children disappear with him deeper into the woods.

3. ON THE STEPS OF THE ORPHANAGE - DUSK

As the orphanage group returns from their outing, the two missing girls are discovered, and sending out a search party is contemplated, but as that has never worked before, they don’t know if they should bother. The orphanage personnel are sad, but sigh resignedly as TWO MORE CHILDREN are brought in by very HAGGARD PARENTS.

This scene is witnessed by HANSEL, 11, GRETEL, 10, their father TOMAS, 33 and their governess KEESIA, 29. Tomas in particular notices this sad scene—Kessia is too preoccupied adjusting her lacy, blue shawl to fall ‘just so’ around her shoulders, offsetting

her silky blonde hair and soft blue eyes to great advantage. Hansel and Gretel are too busy bickering to do more than notice the orphanage scene—they keep pushing each other off the sidewalk and on to the grass, claiming the other is on *their* side. “Am not.” “Are too!” “Honestly,” Kessia says in her melodious voice, “do you see, Tomas, what I have to put up with? And believe me, they’re on their best behavior when you’re here.” Tomas looks sternly at his children—but as soon as he looks away, they start shoving each other.

4. HANSEL AND GRETEL’S HOUSE - NIGHT

The house is attractive from the outside—kind of a mini-castle. But inside... there’s hardly a stick of furniture. And as the sun sets, some MEN are there to remove a grandfather clock, for which Tomas is given a few coins. The MAN apologizes to Tomas for not being able to give him more, but times being what they are...

The family eats their meager dinner of bread and weak tea while Hansel and Gretel have a kicking duel under the table until WHOOPS!--Hansel kicks Keesia by mistake. Or was it? Because despite Hansel’s protests that it was a mistake, both he and Gretel go into convulsive laughter as she moans in pain.

That night as he tucks them into bed, Tomas asks Hansel and Gretel to be nicer to Keesia. “I’m nice to her,” Hansel replies. “Most of the time.” Gretel, “Well I don’t like her, dad. She’s nothing like mom and...” The expression on her face tells her she’s said too much. Her voice softens and she agrees to try harder. “Just give her a chance,” Tomas asks. “After all, she was your mother’s friend. And don’t forget, Keesia lost her husband last year and is still grieving.” He kisses them goodnight and tells them tomorrow’s trip should take him away for just two days, and when he returns he shall hopefully have a treat for each of them.

5. DEEP IN THE WOODS/HANSEL AND GRETEL’S HOUSE - DAY

Keesia walks with the children until they reach a clearing. Once there, she makes a fire for them, sits them down by it, gives them some bread and cheese, and tells them that she has an errand and will be back for them before nightfall. But when nightfall comes and she’s not there, they get up and follow a path of white stones back to their house. They argue about whether Keesia deserted them on purpose. Gretel is sure she did, but Hansel tells her she always thinks she’s so smart, but dad’s right—Keesia loves them. Why would she desert them on purpose?

When they arrive home Keesia is annoyed at first but then says she’s so glad they’re back. Keesia tells them she was hit on the head and forgot where she left them. How lucky their dad taught them that stone trick! “See,” Hansel tells Gretel. He knew she loved them. Gretel says nothing but later that night puts a toad in his bed and watches as he jumps about 10 feet. She knows he hates stupid frogs so that’s not fair he screams!!

6. HANSEL AND GRETEL’S HOUSE/THE WOODS/THE HOUSE - DAY/NIGHT

The next morning as they are being dressed to head into the woods once again, Hansel fills his pockets with more of the shiny white stones that saved them yesterday but Keesia laughs about yesterday and says she won’t forget them today, that’s sure. No need for those stones

she assures him. Hansel smiles back at her beautiful smile and despite Gretel shaking her head “No!” he drops the stones on the ground and returns Keesia’s mesmerizing smile. What Hansel doesn’t see is that Gretel hides her bread under her cape and tears pieces of it off and throws them onto the path as they walk into the woods. Keesia tells them to help them enjoy their day, she managed to procure them each a piece of chocolate. Hansel looks at Gretel as if to say, “Told ya,” while they both devour the chocolate.

Gretel proudly tells Hansel what she has done and he refuses to share his bread with her. It’s her own fault, she should have trusted Keesia, just like he and dad do. As the sun gets low in the sky, though, it’s Gretel who is triumphant. Hansel, though admitting Gretel could be right, says there’s probably a perfectly good explanation of why Keesia didn’t come back for them. As they continue to follow the path of bread... it seems to disappear! And soon there’s no path—and they see why as a small badger scurries onto the path to eat a crumb of bread. The two look at each other. Hansel tells her not to lose heart, he’s sure he can find the way back. But as the sun sets and the moon gets high, it’s clear he’s lost. Gretel says this is all his fault. If he had seen what a witch Keesia is, he never would have agreed to come in the woods without the stones. They sit down under a tree and fall asleep, each leaning on opposite sides of the tree.

7. HANSEL AND GRETEL’S HOUSE - NIGHT

Tomas arrives home to a very distraught Keesia. ‘The children have run away,’ she tells him. What will we do?’ Tomas comforts her and they search the children’s room for clues. They discover the children’s swim things and pail and shovel that they build sand castles with are missing, so they set off for the sea, sure that’s where they’ve gone. Keesia is warm and content in her deception, and is very loving with Tomas.

The next morning she tells him with the kids gone he should throw himself back into his work—build up the business—then when they’re found, he’ll be able to provide for them better. Maybe he can even get back the contract to supply the King’s furniture. But Tomas only wants to go searching for Hansel and Gretel. Keesia consoles him but continues to try and motivate him to get on with his work... but she’s not having much luck, so she is not happy—her beautiful face contorting into a most unpleasing sight.

8. THE WOODS/THE WITCH’S HOUSE - NIGHT/DAY

Hansel and Gretel try for two days and nights to find food and water as they continue to search for a way back home. They argue about everything, from which side of the tree moss is supposed to grow on (which if they could agree would at least tell them which direction they were walking in) to whether or not certain berries are edible. But no matter which path they follow, they only seem to get deeper and deeper into the wildness. At the end of the second day, Hansel collapses under a tree, ready to give up. But Gretel insists they keep going. He refuses, but she takes just a few steps and GASPS. Through the foliage she sees paradise. Hansel runs to join her and can’t believe his eyes. They approach the vision cautiously, Hansel telling Gretel he’s read about men in the desert seeing visions like this before they die. But Gretel points out it’s unlikely they see the SAME vision.

At the gates of this incredible storybook house, pond and gazebo— all surrounded by a picket fence— Hansel and Gretel call out, but no one comes to greet them. They open the gate and walk into the yard. Everything inside the gate is glistening with beauty. When they get to the house, Gretel can't believe it, but it looks as if it's coated with sugar. She reaches out her hand to touch it and sugar crystals fall in her palm. She licks her hand. Then she breaks off a bit of a shingle and it's like a yummy gingerbread cookie. She gives a piece to Hansel and makes him eat it. His eyes widen with surprise.

Feast time. They taste it all— flowers (a myriad of fruit flavored candies), grass (apple flavored licorice), the pond waterfall (which is like a blue fizzy drink), thatched roof (frosted ginger cookies), white window frames and windowsills (marshmallow creme), stone path to doorway (rock candy), the picket fence (marzipan), even the ground—varying shades of brown—is peanut butter and chocolate (from milk to semi-sweet to dark).

So intent are they on their eating, they don't notice the Witch, watching them from a window on the second floor, as Bertram the butterfly hovers near her.

Joining them in their eating, in fact pushing them out of the way from time to time, is Regina the pig. At one point, as Gretel is sitting on the ground and feasting on a jelly bean bush, Regina runs toward her and LEAPS onto her lap. Gretel's nearly crushed by her weight. And then Regina lets out the weirdest sound—something between an OINK and a PURR. Gretel wiggles out from under her as the witch approaches. Bertram then flies over to Gretel and starts to hump her leg—which is hard to accomplish for a butterfly! Gretel swats him away and he barely escapes, “Murder!” he cries. “She's trying to murder me!”

The witch. Hansel and Gretel exchange a look. Initially, her appearance is quite scary. She's an ugly old crone who tells them her name is Mirana. Gretel blurts out “What a pretty name for such an ugl...” And Hansel clocks her and a hitting match ensues. Hansel apologizes for Gretel and says they're both a little overwhelmed... talking animals and everything. But Mirana tells them they should start over. She puts on her best manners, invites them into the house— which is as charming on the inside as it is on the outside. She tells them that an enchantment of sorts left her here in candyland. Or, she tries to tell them between all the bickering. “He got more pudding than me!” “She burped in my face!” He pushes her face away for burping and she throws her pudding in his face and—OOPS! What doesn't SPLAY all over the room lands right on Mirana. Mirana starts to get angry, then the three of them just burst into laughter and it looks like they're going to have a chance at a nice evening. Wrong. The bickering escalates and Mirana warns them to stop or face the consequences, but they don't, so she leaves them squabbling in their room and tells them to sleep well.

9. INT. WITCH'S HOUSE - DAY

Hansel awakens and it's nearly noon. He tries to get up from his nice cozy bed, but realizes there's no place for him to go— his bed is surrounded by a steel cage. Gretel, still asleep in the bed next to his, is not caged in. He wakes her up by throwing one of his shoes through the bars at her. At first she laughs at his predicament, then she realizes what's happening and tells Hansel she's scared.

Mirana arrives at that moment and tells her she should be scared, and that unless Gretel does everything the witch says, she, too, will find herself in a cage. Gretel balks. She's a crazy old witch and she'd better let them go! "And you're a little brat who's lucky I don't change her into a flea—a creature as insignificant as she." Mirana presents Hansel with a hearty lunch of chicken and dumplings and watches as he eats, telling him she finds chubby children so much tenderer... She reaches out and feels his finger and tells him he can use more meat on his bones. When Mirana asks if he's finished, Hansel and Gretel look at each other. They see her squint and realize she can't see well enough to be sure he's finished his lunch. So he lies, tells her he's done, and she tells Gretel to bring the tray. Gretel takes the tray, but not before she throws one of the chicken bones back onto Hansel's bed.

As she leaves, Bertram, who watched that little scene, tells Mirana she's scaring the little brats. Congratulations, she replies. And it's for their own good. "This way, when I send them on their way, they'll be grateful... and perhaps better to one another. How I wish someone had taught my brother and me the importance of working together." Bertram snorts, "I'd like just one minute in a room with your brother." He FARTS at the thought... and Mirana whooshes him away from her. "Butterfly farts are even worse than the ones you used to have."

10. INT. WITCH'S HOUSE - DAY

Each day after that Mirana feels Hansel's 'finger' but he presents the bone... and she's so mad that he's not getting fatter she keeps bringing mounds and mounds of food for him to eat. And poor Gretel! She has to jump at Mirana's every bidding and that stupid pig Regina is driving her crazy. She keeps jumping up on Gretel's lap—dirt flying everywhere as she does. And she keeps pouncing her hulking body on anything that moves. Weird. When Gretel suggests if Mirana is really hungry she should cook up Regina, Gretel is threatened with a cage of her own.

Finally, though, Mirana says she will wait no longer. She's starving for some tender boy meat. She tells Gretel to light the oven by crawling in the back and lighting the pilot light. But Gretel feigns ignorance. Mirana tells her she's a stupid girl and crawls in back to show her, saying, "See?" But just as she does that, Gretel SLAMS the oven door shut, puts a chair in front of it so that it can't be opened, then grabs the key to Hansel's cage and runs upstairs.

Excited, Gretel unlocks him, tells him what she's done, and then runs back downstairs to the sound of the witch's SCREAMS.

They're high-fiving each other and ridiculing Mirana. They've won! They killed the witch! But soon her cries get more plaintive, and they look at each other. Can they do this? Can they really kill her? Gretel says, "Hansel..." and he says "No!" He knows immediately what she's thinking. And they argue about whether to let her out, but finally Hansel, too, can't stand to hear her cries. And they open the oven door and let her out, pouring cool water over her toasty body.

Expecting reprisals, they cower before her, but she surprises them and tells them they've passed the test. She could have used her powers to open the oven but she was hoping they

would *agree* on showing compassion to her. And they did! And for that, they will be rewarded. She's proud of both of them. Gretel replies that this was a stupid test in the first place and getting out of here can't happen soon enough to suit her. Mirana sighs—looks like she's taught Gretel exactly nothing.

11. INT. TOMAS'S HOUSE - DAY

Tomas is so distraught at his children's absence he's unable to work. The LANDLORD comes to repossess the house which is devoid of anything except for their clothes, and he and Keesia are out on the street, Tomas telling her that at least they have each other. Keesia tells him he's got to be kidding, she thought he was an up and comer, not some pathetic loser— so she leaves, taking all of their meager possessions with her and telling him he's just as stupid as his two bratty kids.

12. INT. WITCH'S HOUSE - DAY

Mirana tells them that they've won the right to enter the enchanted kingdom. She can send them anywhere in the kingdom they wish to go. Of course, they want to go back to their father. But alas, her ability only extends into the enchanted world. And she gives them a book detailing their choices.

Wide-eyed they look at the book. It's full of magical lands— all the tales they've ever read of in their storybooks are here, from *Cinderella* to *The Frog Prince* to *The Goose-Girl* to *The Robber Bridegroom* to *Sleeping Beauty* to *The Golden Goose*... it's all here, and each land comes true as they turn the pages of the book. Immediately Hansel and Gretel start arguing— every choice they would make means one of them would be the 'star' in the new land and the other would have to play a supporting role. After driving Mirana nuts with their bickering she reluctantly tells them they can each choose their own new life. For a moment they're stunned, and we feel like each of them would like to say no... that they want to stay together. But neither wants to appear 'weak' and say it, so it remains unsaid. Mirana warns them that this is a mistake, but neither will budge. She tells them, though, that if one of them realizes their mistake they've made, they can wish to join the other and they will be magically transported to the other's new life. "I'll *never* want to be with her." "Who'd want to be with suck a dork."

Defiant, Hansel watches Gretel being sent off into her world— Cinderella. She deserves to be a princess, Gretel tells her brother, and she will settle for nothing less. Gretel waits for him to stop her and he waits for her to change her mind and go with him... and the witch counsels them that this is a mistake, but neither will give in. So Gretel vanishes under Mirana's command and Hansel is then sent to his choice as the youngest brother who finds the golden goose, because, he tells Mirana, he knows how that life will result in him being king. Plus he'll have two brothers and no stupid sisters. She shrugs and sends him on his way.

13. INT. CINDERELLA'S HOUSE - DAY

Gretel wakes up and starts sneezing— because she's breathing in the dusty ashes of her bed. Gross! She's been sleeping in a pile of ashes by this huge fireplace, which she seems to be

sharing with— disgusting mice! She jumps up, looks around and outside the window daylight is just breaking. She looks down at the shabby clothes she's wearing and shivers with revulsion as she goes to the window. She yells for her FAIRY GODMOTHER— who comes and informs her that she was sleeping and doesn't appreciate being awakened. Gretel wants to know where her ball dress is and when the ball starts and could she change these mice into coachmen, like, fast? Ha! The Fairy Godmother asks her— is she kidding? She's 10. The ball is years away. Maybe when she's 17... Gretel falls back into the ashes, stunned, as her STEPMOTHER and 2 MEAN SISTERS descend the stairs, asking for their breakfasts.

14. INT. HOUSE-ON-THE-EDGE-OF-THE-WOODS - DAY

Hansel awakens to the sounds of his new name, "Simpleton!" his BROTHERS yell, throwing pillows at him. At first Hansel doesn't mind the abuse of his two older brothers— it's just so cool to have brothers at all. But pretty soon he gets the lay of the land— they think he's an idiot and don't let him do anything— but manage to blame him for *everything*. He tells them one day he's going to find a golden goose and they'll all be rich and he'll be king, but all his brothers keep doing is beating him up, as older brothers do. It's sort of nice to have parents, but they too seem to think he's a little... slow. Hansel keeps trying to do things to improve their opinion of him, but as he's not really familiar with the ins and outs of his new world, he keeps screwing up. Each day seems to be a lesson in failure for him. And there's no one who really cares for him here. No one.

15. INT. BEAUTIFUL HOUSE - NIGHT

The candles lit all over this lovely little house make it glow with warmth. Tomas sits with Hansel and Gretel on his lap and reads them a story; as he closes the book, a tickling match ensues, broken up by a BEAUTIFUL DARK-HAIRED WOMAN, who we only see the back of. But we hear her mellifluous voice as she tells everyone she's got hot chocolate and cinnamon cookies for them.

SMASH CUT TO:

Tomas waking up under a tree in the woods— waking up from his dream to the reality of being asleep under a tree, alone in the forest. He leans back and cries.

16. INT. MIRANA'S BEDROOM - DAYBREAK

Mirana is startled awake by the sound of footsteps coming up the stairs. She yells out to whoever it is to stop or she'll crush them... but the footsteps keep coming. She reaches out a hand to cast the spell, but when the door opens and we see the shadowy figure of a handsome man who smiles at her, Mirana lowers her hand. "My love," says the man.

SMASH CUT TO:

Mirana sitting up in bed, and seeing across from her not a man, but a mirror on which is reflected her ugly self. "I love you," Mirana says sarcastically to her reflection. Yeah, right,

like that's ever going to happen. She punches her pillows and buries her head under the covers.

17. A SPLIT SCREEN

On the left side of the screen is Hansel, who can't stand another minute of abuse from his new family. He looks up at the sky and wishes out loud that he could be back with Gretel. On the right side of the screen is Gretel, who is about to go nuts listening to the orders of her stepsisters. She looks up at the sky and wishes out loud that she could be back with Hansel.

And BAM. They both get their wish and are plucked from their lives. But...they're back in the front yard of Mirana's house! They hug each other and laugh happily. They start telling each other of their horrible lives when Mirana comes out and sees them. Bummer. These two back again. She hadn't counted on them each making that wish at the same moment, which is no doubt why they ended up back here. Hansel begs not to have to go back into the land of enchantment—which isn't all it's cracked up to be they inform her. But Mirana is adamant. After dinner, they go. Gretel can't wait. She's not at all happy to see Mirana again. She wants out of here, out of these stupid woods and this stupid house and away from stupid ugly old YOU!

But then something happens. Gretel faints. She's burning up with fever. Mirana looks worried.

18. INT. GRETTEL'S SICKROOM - DAY/NIGHT

Gretel is horribly sick and Hansel is kept from her, Mirana being afraid he may catch her illness. Mirana is so very tender with her. And after many days and nights, Gretel gets well. Hansel is finally allowed to see her and Gretel sits up in her bed and smiles at Mirana. It's clear Mirana has taken very good care of Gretel. Gretel leans forward and kisses her, warts and all. Hansel tells Gretel he's glad she's well. He would have been... he would have missed her. "Really?" she asks, surprised. Ne nods. And in that moment, something is changed between them. Gretel turns to Mirana and says she's sorry she called her ugly. But Mirana laughs, "I've looked in the mirror, and ugly I am. But it wasn't always so..."

As they eat dinner, Mirana decides they've earned the right to hear her story, to see what can happen when a brother and sister *don't* get along. And we SEE HER STORY UNFOLD: It seems she's a Princess— Mirana had been her name. She and her brother, Prince Griffin, fought over the kingdom when their parents died, each trying to outdo the other in evil deeds. And her brother, largely by gaining control of the MAGIC SCEPTER, whose power is very simple—it gives the bearer whatever he or she wants for his/her own family or to protect his/her family. It serves and protects. And when Griffin won, he used that power to protect himself from her and relegated her to this little patch of forest and a life of ugliness and loneliness, while he became King Griffin and ruled the land. He even cast a spell on her beautiful cat Regina and turned her into a pig, and her stately bulldog Bertram became a butterfly. Mirana remembers her brother laughing that he'd give her one shot— if a man were to fall in love with her, she'd become a Princess once again. She smoothes back her horribly wiry gray hair and says sarcastically, "So I'm expecting him any day."

After hearing the story, Hansel and Gretel look at each other. I mean, they sympathize with her, but think that's no excuse for what she's done— all the children she's... eaten. But Mirana laughs— she never ate any of them! She rescued them from the orphanages and sent them to better worlds. She just tested Hansel and Gretel to see if she could teach them a lesson—she's never hurt a child! She saved them from horrible fates. And speaking of better worlds, perhaps if they're more careful this time they could find a land that pleased them both. But they refuse. They want to find their father and they want Mirana to come with them. Mirana is moved but tells them she cannot. The minute she goes outside her gate, she will lose her powers and become just an ordinary woman. And she wouldn't be safe from her brother's wrath. At least here she's got three powers: she can conjure up food—hence the candy house and grounds; she can do whatever's necessary to save her own life; and she can banish anyone she wishes to any enchanted land. She's used that third power to help a lot of orphaned kids have happier lives. She guesses that began when a couple of poor kids whose parents had died stumbled upon the house. She felt sorry for them. At least she had a house and food to eat—everyone deserves that much. So she let them choose a new life, a new start—the one thing she would wish for herself if she had the power.

19. EXT. WITCH'S HOUSE - DAY

Hansel and Gretel, each carrying a pack with food and water and a blanket, are being guided by Mirana as to her best guess as to where they might go. Bertram says he'll help— but he can't promise he knows much about how to get out of the woods. They're at the gate, leaving, and Mirana can't stand it. She loves them more than her powers and can't send them into the woods alone, and perhaps if she's careful she can escape her brother's henchmen.

Hansel and Gretel are delighted and as they leave, hand in hand with Mirana, they turn back and see the beautiful gingerbread house melt into sugar syrup— into nothing. Regina had planned to stay— envisioning a life of laying around, wallowing in the mud she knows rather than whatever horror is ahead, but as there's nothing left to eat, she's forced to come along. But the rest of them know that down deep, Regina doesn't want to leave them.

20. EXT./INT. KING GRIFFIN'S PALACE - DAY

King Griffin knows the moment his sister leaves that patch of land in the forest— he can feel it. He immediately issues an order, offering a very large reward for whoever finds Princess Mirana and brings her to him.

Many come with information, supposed sightings of his sister, but with his powers he's usually able to tell who is lying and who is truthful. He's quite bored as he sits on the throne and listens to these fools. But he sits up when Keesia approaches his throne. He's certainly taken by her beauty and when she tells him she's had a dream that this man, Tomas, whose children she had been governess to, has been helping the princess, King Griffin sees that she's telling the truth. He invites her to stay in a cottage on the castle grounds. And she demurely agrees.

21. INT. FOREST - DAY/NIGHT

The forest has obstacles aplenty— Mirana is having a hard time living without powers and she and the kids are horribly lost. Bertram and Regina provide both annoyance and comic relief. But everyone's tired and hungry... and the forest is full of men looking for the princess— they even see a poster with the announcement of the reward, with a picture of Mirana as the old crone she now is on the poster.

In another part of the forest, Tomas, now very bedraggled, sees just such a poster and decides to look for the princess as he continues to look for his children.

One day, Hansel, Gretel and Mirana meet Tomas— they don't recognize him, so long has his beard grown and so dirty are his clothes. But Tomas immediately falls on his knees, saying his children's names. Once they realize he's their father, they run to him. Mirana is glad the children have found him, but realizes very soon that this is a family scene. She turns to quietly leave them, but it's Tomas who calls to her, and when she turns back and he really sees her for the first time, he realizes she is the princess. He thanks her for helping his children. He gets up from hugging the kids and reaches out his hand to her— she takes his hand and as they touch, there's a literal SPARK of electricity. "You have my undying gratitude," he tells her. "My humble being will forever be in your debt."

But their reunion is interrupted by footsteps. Tomas cautions them to be silent and leads them away from the footsteps. Once the danger has passed, Tomas shows Mirana the poster offering the reward.

What are they going to do?

22. EXT. FOREST - NIGHT/INT. PUB - NIGHT

Tomas leads them out of the forest, but he doesn't know where to take them, as he has no house any longer and no money for lodgings. Mirana removes a bejeweled bracelet and gives it to him.

The four of them sit in a booth in a dark corner of the pub, Mirana's back to the room so no one will recognize her. They ravenously eat their food as they listen to the conversation swirl around them— conversation that is full of 'sightings' of the princess. Tomas buys a paper from the barkeep and they read the latest news— including something that surprises all of them. The king is to be married. And his intended? None other than Keesia.

23. INT. CARRIAGE - NIGHT

Soon the four of them are in a private carriage bound for the capital, which houses the king's castle.

Hansel and Gretel tell their father and Mirana what Keesia did to them. And Tomas relates that after Keesia left him, many friends of their mother told him he was well rid of her, as it

was rumored Keesia's first husband had died under mysterious circumstances... and that Keesia's potions were suspected, though nothing could be proved.

Mirana has little affection for her brother. But she finds that when she thinks of his death, she is very unhappy. She knows that if she had not been banished to her world of loneliness and ugliness, she would probably be just as callous as her brother is now.

She needs to save him—and not just from Keesia. They all vow to help her—and to help her regain her rightful place in the kingdom. “Surely,” Tomas says, “with a heart as big as yours running it, our kingdom will prosper and people will be happy once again.”

24. EXT. CASTLETOWN - DAY

Before they get ready to storm the castle—their plan being for Tomas to pretend he's turning in Mirana for the reward in order for them to gain entry—Tomas and Mirana, fearing for the kids safety, leave Hansel and Gretel at the local orphanage. Hansel can't believe it. And Gretel, for once in her life, is speechless. But Mirana tells them she knows what her brother can be like and she doesn't want them hurt. The kids aren't buying it, they're stunned at first, but then they're livid. They can help. They're sure of it. Let them be part of the plan, let them act as distractions. The guards will let kids go places they won't let Tomas if he's caught. They can help get the magic scepter from the king, they know they can. “Please!” they beg.

But Tomas and Mirana are firm. If the very worst happens, they need to know that Hansel and Gretel will be safe, that they will be cared for.

So the scene at the beginning of the film is echoed—children being left on the steps of an orphanage by distraught adults. But Hansel and Gretel are in the orphanage for about three seconds... because they surreptitiously follow their dad. When they make themselves known at the castle gates, Tomas and Mirana are livid and told they listen from now on and *do what they're told*.

25. INT. CASTLE - DAY

Inside the castle gates, Tomas has Mirana in hand, refusing to give her to the guards until he sees the king and gets his reward. Bertram flies along and Regina drags herself along. And though Bertram is ignored, Regina is immediately relegated to the castle's farming pens and put with all the other animals. She protests... her royal bearing should mean something after all! But her ranting is ignored and soon she's in a pen with many other pigs—one of whom is trying to get just a little too friendly. Hansel and Gretel are told they may wait in the gardens for their father to return but they are not allowed in the castle.

Finally, Tomas and Mirana are given an audience with his royal highness. And King Griffin is stunned to see his sister. He immediately gives Tomas his reward and waves him out of the room. Once outside, Tomas fights with the two guards at the door to the throne room, ties them up and puts them in a closet, then runs around back, entering the throne room from the king's entrance on the side. He listens to Mirana and Griffin talk. “I hear you are to be married,” Mirana says, trying to distract him. “Ah, yes. She is the most beautiful woman in

the kingdom. Keesia?” And in walks Keesia, his intended. Mirana tries to attract her attention so that Keesia will not see Tomas. And indeed, Tomas uses this moment to make a run for the throne. He’s about to snatch the scepter when he sees Keesia, and the surprise of seeing her again... he hesitates. That split second of hesitation on his part was all that was needed. Keesia sees him and yells to stop him, she knows that man! And soon the worst has happened. Mirana and Tomas share a cell in the dungeon as Griffin and Keesia debate their fate.

Mirana and Tomas are stunned. Bertram buzzes in and out of the cell and hears their defeat. So, though annoyed at always having to do *everything* he heads out.

26. EXT. CASTLE GARDENS - NIGHT

Bertram flies to Hansel and Gretel, who are plotting their next move as they assess the castle from their garden vantage point. Bertram tells them what’s happened, and helps them sneak into the castle through the kitchen.

Bertram helps the kids plot a way to separate King Griffin from his scepter. They decide the royal bath is their best shot.

27. INT. CASTLE - DAYBREAK

Bertram runs interference for the kids as they make their way to the castle laundry, where they both dress in uniforms. Hansel becomes a knave-in-training and Gretel is given a flowing gown and Bertram tells her to pretend to be the daughter of a troubadour. The castle’s always overflowing with troubadours because the king needs entertainment 24/7. And as Bertram has heard Gretel sing, that could be just the diversion they need to distract him in the throne room should they fail in the bath to retrieve the scepter. And if she gets into any kind of trouble, just start singing and tell people that she’s the king’s new favorite songstress.

Bertram reminds Hansel as they approach the king’s bath, that it’s no good to just grab the scepter, because it must be placed into Mirana’s hands. So unless there’s a chance to get it to the dungeon and to Mirana, they should wait and try some other way.

But Hansel can’t wait. He’s not in the king’s bath for five seconds when he grabs the scepter and runs for all he’s worth. But he barely gets 20 feet down the hallway before he’s caught. The king laughs when the scepter is brought back. He says he admires the young man’s nerve so decides to spare his life— he takes the scepter and waves it in Hansel’s direction, speaks a few words, and WHOOSH. Hansel is turned into a FROG. The king reaches down, picks up Hansel the frog, and THROWS him out the window, where he lands in a fountain.

Bertram flies down to his side. Hansel the frog is a bit lightheaded, but he survived his splash in the fountain— though things look so bleak he kind of wishes he hadn’t. Bertram tells him to stay put, he’s going to find Gretel.

But when Bertram returns with Gretel, Hansel the frog is nowhere to be found. Now it’s all up to Gretel.

28. INT. CASTLE DUNGEON- DAY

Tomas and Mirana sit side by side on a cot. He tells her that whatever happens he thanks her for saving his kids. She must tell him if there is anything he can do—ever—to repay her. A tear rolls down her wart-covered cheek: “No payment will be required,” she says, with royal bearing.

29. EXT./INT. CASTLE - DAY

Bertram flies to the dungeon and tells Mirana and Tomas not to worry. He’s got everything under control. Aren’t they allowed to walk after lunch or something? Mirana tells them just after lunch they’re allowed to walk in the gardens for ten minutes. Bertram says to be on guard, that he has a plan that may bring the scepter to them. Oh, and to be on the lookout for a frog. What frog? they ask. Bertram tells him they’ll know him when they see him.

Gretel, nervous as all get out, now has to do it. She has to sing for the king and make it good. So good that he is lulled to sleep— which occasionally happens after he’s had a hearty meal. In the meantime, Bertram has to find a way to keep Keesia out of the throne room, because she would certainly recognize Gretel.

Bertram gets to the pigs as they’re led out for their morning grazing and distracts the farmer by buzzing around him— so much so Bertram’s nearly killed by the farmer’s swats in his direction! But while he’s distracted, Regina sneaks out and hides on the other side of the barn. Bertram soon joins her there and they head off toward one of the cottages on the palace grounds. It is in this guest cottage that Keesia is staying. Regina is told to stand guard and not let her out of the cottage, no matter what.

After the king downs a hearty lunch, complaining that Keesia has not seen fit to join him, Gretel enters. The king is a tough audience and there are two guards with him. Bertram buzzes around the guards creating such a commotion that the king banishes the guards saying he’s sure this child cannot compromise his safety. And Gretel’s really nervous at first, but soon she wins him over, and he’s lost in the beauty of Gretel’s song. As he falls asleep, Gretel creeps ever closer, her voice getting softer and softer as she gets closer and closer. She gently removes the scepter from his lap and sings her way out of the room, exiting with Bertram through the back entrance.

30. EXT. PALACE GARDENS - DAY

Tomas and Princess Mirana’s stroll in the gardens, observed from a small distance by TWO GUARDS, is interrupted by Hansel’s voice. At first Tomas shakes his head in disbelief, but Mirana hears it too. Then they see— he’s there, sitting on a lily pad in a garden pool. He whispers to them what has happened.

Meanwhile, Regina has been doing pretty well at blocking Keesia from exiting her cottage, but soon Keesia starts to try and reason with Regina... saying she’s very close to the king and she can feel that Regina was once a much more attractive animal... she could convince the king to make her sleek and lovely once again... Regina waffles for a second, then comes

to her senses and tells Keesia that *she* has influence with the woman who will soon be *queen*, and she will see to it that Keesia is turned into the snake she really is! This scares Keesia so, the thought that another woman could be queen, that she goes into high gear, whacking Regina on her snout with a frying pan... which allows Keesia just enough time to escape. Regina runs after her, but Keesia is way too fast, and Regina watches her run into the castle. Regina sees Mirana and Tomas in the gardens and heads toward them. Tomas and Mirana, for their part, are staring into each other's eyes. "There's something about you," Tomas says. "I feel that I know you. I feel that..." and he leans forward and KISSES HER. Mirana is instantly transformed into the 28-year-old woman she is. Tomas is stunned and Mirana can't *believe* this. He really loves her! "You really love me," she tells him. "No," Tomas replies, looking all around for the Mirana he knows, "I love her. Mirana." "I am her," she says.

But Tomas barely has time to process this because at the same moment, Bertram and Gretel perilously make their way out to the garden, Gretel having wrapped the scepter in the train of her dress as she runs. But the guards, seeing Gretel running toward their prisoners, block her way. She stops, out of breath, and convinces them she's just running around, being silly... don't they have any kids? Then Gretel sees that behind the guards, Griffin and Keesia have just exited the castle. Gretel bobs and weaves as if she's playing 'catch me if you can' with the guards. And they laugh at the charming little girl, letting her 'win.' She gets past them and quickly untangles the scepter from her train and hesitates, looking at this young woman with her father. "It's OK," Tomas says, "this is Mirana. The princess." Gretel gives the scepter to Mirana just as Griffin yells to the guards to grab her. Surprised, they grab her, but not for long as Regina charges in and knocks the guards down! And Mirana keeps the scepter.

The first thing she does is change Hansel from a frog back into himself. She then points the scepter at her brother and we can almost see the electricity flowing out of it. And Griffin can clearly feel it. He's mad, but he stops in his tracks.

"I rule this kingdom," he protests, "scepter or no scepter."

"You rule at the pleasure of your people," Mirana replies.

"My people love me," he says stubbornly.

"We shall see about that," she replies.

31. EXT. CASTLETOWN - DAY

And Mirana proceeds to take him outside the castle walls, Keesia too, but now with the guards doing Mirana's bidding. Tomas, holding hands with each of his children, comes too, as does Bertram and a very tired Regina. Griffin says this is a waste of time, whenever there's a parade his people cheer him. Mirana says she expects the people he has let run the country have paid those that cheer. Griffin tells her she's just as crazy as she was as a kid... And then he sees. The people see him and spontaneously start to boo. Some even throw things. He can't believe it. Mirana assures him that in the rest of the country he would

probably be stoned on sight. If something is not done soon, there will surely be a revolt. She asks him what their parents would think of how he has managed the kingdom.

Griffin is dismayed. Keesia tries to tell him that none of this is important. He needs to concentrate on getting that scepter back from her. Then Tomas tells Griffin of how Keesia left his children in the woods, of how there were rumors of her poisoning her first husband... Griffin pushes her away from him. Keesia is adamant that though she may have ‘misplaced’ the children, her husband died of natural causes.

32. INT. CASTLE - DAY

Mirana now sits on the throne, with Keesia being held in a chair by the guards, Tomas, Hansel, Gretel, Regina and Bertram nearby, and Griffin restlessly pacing. He looks at Keesia, “But she’s so beautiful,” he laments. Mirana tells him that if she has learned one thing, it is that what is on the outside has little to do with what someone is. She tells her brother that she has a compromise. What if they ruled the kingdom together. As brother and sister, as prince and princess. With no scepter. They’ll lock it away.

Griffin is puzzled. Without the power of the scepter, who would let them rule? And besides, how could they ever trust each other... he’d always be worried she was plotting to get the scepter, and vice versa. Mirana tells him that for a time she suspects he would worry about that. But as time passes, as he sees what they can *do* for their country... well, he’ll learn to trust, he’ll feel good about what he can do for his people. He sighs... at least he won’t be bored. But still, about the scepter...

Mirana’s solution is to give it to Hansel and Gretel. That together they will place it in the safe where the crown jewels are kept. They will change the combination— Hansel will pick two numbers and Gretel will pick the other two, and neither will reveal their numbers to each other or anyone else. The jewels will be moved to a new location, so there will be no reason to ever go into the safe containing the scepter... unless there is the kind of trouble in the kingdom that would require the scepter’s power.

And Keesia? Regina has an idea— change her into a pig and make her live in the pigpen. And if some good can be found in her, perhaps she can one day redeem herself and be turned back into a human. And if Prince Griffin wishes to visit her, he can do so. Keesia becomes a pig and Griffin looks on with longing.

“Now,” Bertram says, “about yours truly.” “And me,” chimes in Regina. Mirana asks them if, knowing all they do, do they really want to go back to their former selves? “YES!” they both scream. And so they do. Sleek Regina the cat now purrs and brushes against Tomas’s leg. And Bertram the bulldog sighs contentedly and says he hopes he never sees another flower as long as he lives.

And Tomas? He’d like to help bring to justice the people who have tricked Griffin by stealing the money that should have been going to services for the citizens. Then he’d like to bring the message to the people of the kingdom that things will be different from now on— starting with reuniting many orphanage children with their parents.

Mirana hands the scepter to Hansel and Gretel and two guards lead them to the safe. Each, in holding the scepter, feels its power.

As they arrive at the safe, Hansel muses for a moment what power they would have were they to take the scepter themselves and rule the kingdom. Kids in charge. How cool would that be. Gretel takes the scepter from him... just in case he's tempted, and places it in the safe. But he grins— he was totally kidding. Really. Only, I wonder...