



The True Story of Hansel and Gretel: A Novel of War and Survival

By Louise Murphy

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The True Story of Hansel and Gretel: A Novel of War and Survival By Louise Murphy

A poignant and suspenseful retelling of a classic fairy tale set in a war-torn world

In the last months of the Nazi occupation of Poland, two children are left by their father and stepmother to find safety in a dense forest. Because their real names will reveal their Jewishness, they are renamed "Hansel" and "Gretel." They wander in the woods until they are taken in by Magda, an eccentric and stubborn old woman called "witch" by the nearby villagers. Magda is determined to save them, even as a German officer arrives in the village with his own plans for the children. Louise Murphy's haunting novel of journey and survival, of redemption and memory, powerfully depicts how war is experienced by families and especially by children.

"Lyrical, haunting, unforgettable." —*Kirkus Reviews*

"No reader who picks up this inspiring novel will put it down until the final pages, in which redemption is not a fairy tale ending but a heartening message of hope." —*Publishers Weekly*

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

A provocative transformation of the classic fairy tale into a haunting survival story set in Poland during WWII, Murphy's second novel (after *The Sea Within*) is darkly enchanting. Two Jewish children, a girl of 11 and her seven-year-old brother, are left to wander the woods after their father and stepmother are forced to abandon them, frantically begging them never to say their Jewish names, but to identify themselves as Hansel and Gretel. In an imaginative reversal of the original tale, they encounter a small woman named Magda, known as a "witch" by villagers, who risks her life in harboring them. The story alternates between the children's nightmarish adventures, and their parents' struggle for survival and hope for a safe reunion. This mirror image of the fairy tale is deliberately disorienting, as Murphy describes the horrors of the outside world compared with the haven inside Magda's hut, and the fear and anguish of the other people who conspire to save the children and protect their own families, too. The naive siblings are only half-conscious of much of this, though they are perfectly aware of their peril should they be discovered. The graphic details—the physical symptoms of near starvation, the infestations of lice, the effects of bitter cold—make it plain that this is the grimmest kind of fable. Eventually, the Nazis indulge in wholesale slaughter, and the children barely survive, hiding and on the run. No reader who picks up this inspiring novel will put it down until the final pages, in which redemption is not a fairy tale ending but a heartening message of hope.

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From [Booklist](#)

The stepmother persuades the father to abandon the children in the forest, where they find shelter in the cottage of a witch, who locks them in a cage. It's the scariest of all fairy tales, and it's retold here with gripping realism as a Holocaust novel set in Poland near the end of World War II. Murphy brings the genocide history up close through the horrifying daily experience of 11-year-old Jewish Gretel and her younger brother, who save each other from the worst with the help of a few brave villagers. The Grimms' story is always there like a dark shadow intensifying the drama as the searing narrative transforms the old archetypes. The stepmother and the Romani witch are quiet heroes who sacrifice themselves to save the children, while their father is with the partisan army, desperate to find his family. The children may follow the trail home in the end, but the gruesome reality in the village and the forest prevents any sentimental uplift. The witch does land up in the oven, in a concentration camp. *Hazel Rochman*

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Review

A *San Francisco Chronicle* Best Book of the Year

"This harrowing portrayal of the daily ordeal of Poles caught up in the German occupation—Gentiles as well as Jews—makes this a page-turner as well as a moving testament to the human will to do good and survive despite all odds. Highly recommended." —*Library Journal*

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"A provocative transformation of the classic fairy tale into a haunting survival story set in Poland during WWII. No reader who picks up this inspiring novel will put it down until the final pages, in which

redemption is not a fairy tale ending but a heartening message of hope." —*Publishers Weekly*

"Unusually gripping . . . Lyrical, haunting, unforgettable." —*Kirkus Reviews* (starred review)

"Purely imaginative . . . [Murphy's] characters speak to us with terrible prescience." -*The New York Times Book Review*

"Filled with the breathtaking, sometimes death-defying contortions of war." -*Los Angeles Times*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Cesar Smith:

Have you spare time to get a day? What do you do when you have considerably more or little spare time? Yep, you can choose the suitable activity for spend your time. Any person spent all their spare time to take a stroll, shopping, or went to the particular Mall. How about open or perhaps read a book allowed The True Story of Hansel and Gretel: A Novel of War and Survival? Maybe it is to become best activity for you. You realize beside you can spend your time with the favorite's book, you can better than before. Do you agree with their opinion or you have different opinion?

Dana Richardson:

Now a day people that Living in the era where everything reachable by connect to the internet and the resources within it can be true or not require people to be aware of each facts they get. How people have to be smart in acquiring any information nowadays? Of course the reply is reading a book. Looking at a book can help people out of this uncertainty Information mainly this The True Story of Hansel and Gretel: A Novel of War and Survival book as this book offers you rich info and knowledge. Of course the data in this book hundred % guarantees there is no doubt in it everbody knows.

Dolores Albert:

A lot of people always spent their very own free time to vacation as well as go to the outside with them family or their friend. Do you know? Many a lot of people spent they free time just watching TV, or playing video games all day long. If you wish to try to find a new activity that is look different you can read some sort of book. It is really fun to suit your needs. If you enjoy the book that you read you can spent all day long to reading a publication. The book The True Story of Hansel and Gretel: A Novel of War and Survival it is very good to read. There are a lot of folks that recommended this book. They were enjoying reading this book. If you did not have enough space to bring this book you can buy the actual e-book. You can m0ore effortlessly to read this book from the smart phone. The price is not too expensive but this book provides high quality.

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