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Gretel has Little Red Riding Hood to Tea at the Ritz

Sarah E. Skwire

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unchanging basics, such as Hemingway. Some prefer to flit from current trend to contemporary fad, such as Tom Wolfe. Updike focuses on carving word-shapes while Stephen King wants to make your flesh creep like the Fat Boy in Pickwick.

All are good writers. Each is different. Each good in a different way. Each appreciated by some, loathed by others. Way of the world, this variety, and it enhances us. Better this than dull conformity.

Being didactic, pedantic, or discursive is a choice and neither right nor wrong. Depends on each ms. There is no set of basics that applies to all stories, any more than there is a set of basics that applies to all painting, sculpture, music, or fashion design.

And every assertion can be rebutted by an equal and opposite assertion. Way of the world again. Grow to appreciate it for its diversity and, if you disagree with an annoying point of view, write examples that contradict it, rather than bothering to debate. Lead by example. Demonstrate. Show, don't tell.

Now there's a misunderstood and over-used writing rule if ever there was one.

But that's fodder for another grind of the grist mill; my arm's tired now.

Be soon and write well.

Gretel has Little Red Riding Hood to Tea at the Ritz

by Sarah E. Skwire

The china clinks. No gingerbread is ordered.
We eye each other warily, we two,
Who separately have gone through much the same
Ordeal, but who have nothing beyond that
To bind us to each other. Drinking tea
Beneath the burning crystal chandeliers
That look so much like sugar candy...No.
I do not think I will go into that.

Instead I ask her why she wandered off.
I mean, I know about her granny, sick
And all alone. She was to bring the cakes
And wine. I know that part, but why she left
Protection, left the path, I'll never guess.
If anyone had cared what might become
Of me, or knit me cheerful scarlet hoods,
Or warned me, worried, not to go too far
I might have never done the things I did.
I might have never hoped the things I hoped.

You see, the witch was better than my mother.
I thought it would be nice to stay with her,
Just for a little while. But Hansel, well,
He longed for home so badly, marked the paths
So many times, I couldn't let him stew
About it any longer. She died...No.
I have to be the subject of that clause
Like it or not, I've learned I have to be.

I killed her. Killed the wrong one. I have thought
So many times so late at night that she
Was not the one who should have died.
I store that thought away for later brooding.

My therapist assures me that I did
The only sane thing that I could have done.
I murdered her, saved him; I got him home,
And now I'm here with her, tea at the Ritz,
White gloves, all ladylike, and sugar...No.
I will not think about that craving now.
Instead I lean towards her, and I ask,
"Why did you leave the path? Adventure? Lost?
Or mere stupidity? Why did you go?"

She looks up, cookie crumbs around her mouth,
Considering. Her tongue catches a crumb,
And my hands curl against the tablecloth.
I will not do this. I will not be tempted.
I will not put to use the things I've learned
From mothers, witches, wolves, and forest paths.

I smile sedately, drink my tea, and nod,
As she politely tries to answer me,
To struggle with the sense of all her nonsense
To see what makes her different from me.

I wonder how she'd taste with honey glaze.