

I'm going to tell you a little story, a true story. The names have been contributed by our neighbors.

Once upon a time in a land far away there lived a boy named Hansel and a girl named Gretel. Hansel was from Germany; Gretel was of Italian-German origins, born near Chicago. They met on a nude beach in Greece. Hansel was sitting in his van in his underwear cutting green beans. Gretel liked this very much.

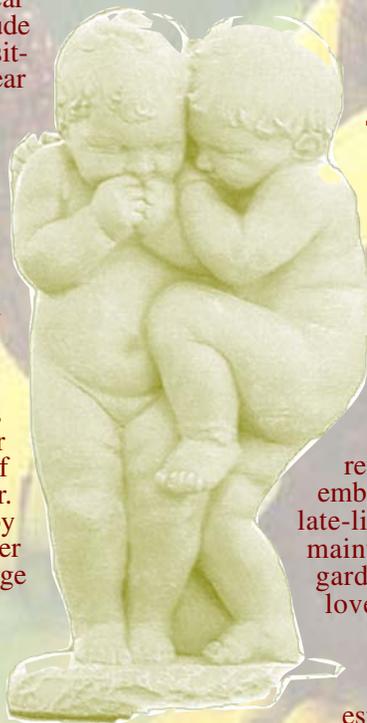
Sometime later Hansel went to Chicago to see Gretel; they were betrothed and a wonderful time was had by all. Hansel was from Germany where the people had overpopulated the land some time ago. Gretel was from the Chicago suburbs where her father grew roses, lilies, grapes and vegetables. Her mother made her wreaths of Rose of Sharon and gladiolas to wear. Her bedroom was perfumed by wisteria vine every spring. Her childhood was filled with large spaces, trees and flowers.

But, alas, there too the people came to use up all the surrounding land and the garden now was in the middle of a large parking lot. The deer were reduced to eating ornamental shrubbery and the geese had to walk single file in a crosswalk to a corporate lawn with corporate water. This really happened.

Both Hansel and Gretel had a secret dormant passion for gardening. They never spoke of it—it just revealed itself to them. It started with a dahlia. Gretel's sister gave it to them for a house-warming present, potted in a 4-inch pot. Gretel had found an apartment with a tree-filled garden in a poor neighborhood for \$135 a month. (Most rents were from \$600 to \$1000 in Chicago at that time.) Gretel liked this very much.

She painted the entire place and filled it with flowers and fine food in anticipation of her betrothed. He arrived and became her spouse. They planted the dahlia along with some alyssum seed in a 3'x3' patch of trod-

den earth. Their pride was so great that they gathered their friends around to celebrate their creation. They took photographs. When they saw the prints they realized that their friends thought they were nuts! But they celebrated anyway (good



friends). And Hansel and Gretel knew they were on to something. They could see what no one else saw—they saw a garden. So it came to pass that Gretel's father needed some income to supplement his retirement. He embarked upon a late-life career maintaining estate gardens on the lovely North Shore of Lake Michigan; real pricy real estate. One day

Gretel's father was asked to wash a rug. Gretel's father didn't do rugs. He asked, no, commanded Gretel to take his place. Gretel cursed and spat and hurled insults at her father (in her head) and yet it was at this juncture that Gretel's passion was kindled and a career was born. So, too, was Hansel's, for the next time Gretel's father needed a rug washed she sent Hansel. But Hansel didn't do rugs; he did gardens and soon Gretel's father was giving them all his garden work. He moved on to doing interiors.

So Hansel and Gretel nurtured people's gardens and they learned. And they read and they brought home all manner of plants. They soon outgrew the garden in a poor neighborhood so they planted in the alley and they planted behind the garbage cans and they planted in the glass and garbage strewn lot next door to their apartment. When that was full they plant-

ed in their neighbor's gardens. They were really getting obnoxious.

So then they asked their clients if they could plant at their houses, too. They said okay. And they began to design gardens. Their clients liked this very much.

In six years in this place where brother knifed his brother, men would drink at night, working ladies would bring their clients and where garbage picking was a career, their garden suffered few losses. Some dummies stole the potted canna, which would die, and a few houseplants. A wino, in a drunken stupor, fell into the lovely fuzzy inviting carrot patch outside the fence and some 10-year-old boys suffering from hormone poisoning had a tomato fight which Gretel joined and scared the silly creatures. Gretel liked this very much.

But while hell was dancing all around them the garden seemed to be respected by all. Yet it came to pass that Hansel and Gretel became restless. The city no longer held their attention as it once did and they spent more and more time in their garden. Or they drove out into the country to visit gardens, flowers and nature.

At last they found themselves, through a series of unusual circumstances, purchasing five acres on the edge of Fayette County, Tennessee. (All of Hansel and Gretel's friends were flocking to Seattle, Washington, and Gretel knew it would soon lose the very charm that drew them there. It would in fact become a big city!) Gretel was attracted to Fayette County because no one knew where it was...And Hansel and Gretel like this very much.

The End.

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