

Twist the Text: The Little Red Riding Hood Collection

Alternative Ending



Once upon a time (and a very fine time it was), a girl called Red lived with her mother, in a cottage on the outskirts of a great forest.

On this particular spring day, Mother took a batch of fresh cupcakes from the oven and placed them on the table, where they steamed gently.

“Little Red!” shouted Mother, banging her rolling pin on the table. “Little Red! Time to get up.”

It was nearly noon and Red had only just woken up. She leapt out of bed, knowing that her mother would be cross. “Coming, Mother!” she called as she ran downstairs.

Red smelt the cupcakes before she saw them: sweet, buttery and delicious. As she entered the kitchen, she imagined sinking her teeth through the soft sponge for a huge bite. She reached out to take one, but her mother stilled her hand with one look.

“These smell delicious,” said Red, backing away. “You’ve been busy, Mother. Who are they for?”

“They’re for Granny, so keep your mucky fingers off. I didn’t raise you to steal from little old ladies. Why, your poor granny lives alone in the forest, surrounded by fearsome creatures. The

least I can do is bake her a cupcake or two every now and then.”

“I wouldn’t dream of touching Granny’s cupcakes,” Red reassured her mother, but her stomach rumbled greedily.

Red was always hungry. She thought that it might have something to do with the way that she was growing. She knew that she was getting taller from one week to the next, because of the hooded cape that her granny had knitted her. The cape was red – just like her name. Each time she put it on, the cape’s hem hung a little higher on her legs.

Mother huffed and put her hands on her hips.

“Now, you’re to take the cupcakes straight to Granny’s,” she said, piling them into a wicker basket. “No dilly-dallying, keep to the path, and never ever talk to strangers. Do you hear me?”

“Yes, Mother.” With a sigh, Red took the basket and hurried from the kitchen into the glorious spring sunshine.

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As she skipped merrily through the sun-dappled forest, Little Red’s hazel eyes sparkled and her bright red cape swung just above her ankles. Her red hair shone in the afternoon sun and her small, freckled nose wrinkled as she smiled cheerfully at her woodland friends: the rabbits and birds. The birds flitted about, carrying sticks for their nests, and the bluebells beside the path nodded contentedly to themselves. Occasionally, Red would pause and lightly touch the petals of the wildflowers with her dainty fingers as she stopped to smell them. It was a warm day, nearly summer, and it was hard to believe that anything fearsome lived in these woods.



A soft breeze blew and the blossom shook on the trees. It was the perfect day for a picnic. Red thought longingly of the cupcakes in her basket.

In fact, she was so busy thinking about cupcakes that she didn't spot a shadowy figure leaning against a tree trunk.

"Hello, little girl," said a silky voice.

Red jumped. "Who are you?"

"I'm Mr Wolf," said the wolf. He was a very fine-looking gentleman with thick hair, bright eyes and very big, white teeth. "My, what a gorgeous day it is. Don't you just love the fragrant smell of the flowers? The twittering of the birds?"

Red blushed. Suddenly, her cape felt too tight around her neck. "I didn't think that wolves would like birds and flowers," she stammered.

"My dear, I simply adore them! I am a wolf of great taste, you know. Where might you be off to on this fine morning?"

"I'm visiting my granny." Red felt flustered. Mother had told her not to speak to strangers, but Mr Wolf seemed a very respectable and charming sort of person.

"Oh, yes, I know your granny," said the wolf. "Old woman? Stooped? Grey hair?"

"That's her," said Red.

"Yes, she lives in a..." Mr Wolf waved a claw in the air as if it were just on the tip of his tongue.

"Wooden cottage," said Red, to help him out.

"That's right, next to the..."

"Horse chestnut tree."



"Of course, not far from the..."

"Stream," said Red. She was impressed. Mr Wolf was almost as good at trickery as Red was. Not good enough to actually fool her, of course.

There was only one way to trick a trickster: beat him at his own game.

"I'm meant to be bringing Granny this basket of cakes," said Red, "but they do smell so delicious, and it's so hard not to simply gobble them all up."

"Well, why don't you stop for a picnic?" asked Mr Wolf. "There's a lovely spot over there." He pointed to a sunny clearing, crowded with daffodils.

"But they're meant to be for Granny," said Red, gasping with feigned shock. "Anyway, Mother told me not to dilly-dally, or to leave the path."

"Oh, that clearing's quite safe," the wolf assured her. "I'm sure that your granny won't mind. Not if you pick her a big bunch of flowers to make up for it."

"Yes, you're right," said Red. The wolf was totally fooled. Red fought to suppress a grin. "Thank you, Mr Wolf. I never knew that wolves were so kind."

"My pleasure," said the wolf, and with a bow, he stalked off down the path.

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As the wolf stalked away, Red laughed to herself. She'd heard stories about wolves like him. They wooed you with fine words, then gobbled you up for tea. Red wasn't about to let that happen to her.

As soon as the wolf was out of sight, Red dashed through the undergrowth, speeding in a direct line towards Granny's house. She had promised her mother not to leave the path, but this was a promise that Red always made and never kept. In fact, Red knew the hidden routes through the forest as well as any wild animal.

Puffing and panting, Red ran up to her granny's door.

Knock, knock, knock.

“Who is it?” quavered a frail voice from inside.

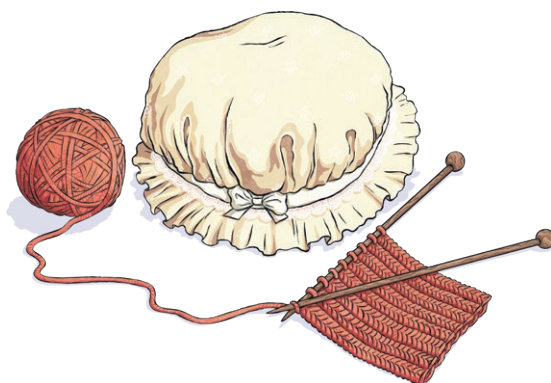
“It’s me, Granny! It’s your granddaughter,” called Red.

“The door’s unlocked, dear,” said Granny, so Red flung the door open and dashed inside.

“Granny, we have to be quick,” said Red, pulling the old lady from her rocking chair. “A wolf is coming, and he’s planning to eat us. But not if we trick him first.”

Granny brandished her knitting needles. “I may be old, but I’m no one’s dinner,” she said. “What’s the plan?”

“Well, for starters,” said Red, “you’ll need your reading glasses.”



The wolf wandered through the forest, humming happily to himself. The sun sprinkled dancing lights through the leaves, and daffodils crowded the edge of the path. The wolf knew that he was in for an enormous dinner.

At last, he reached the wooden cottage next to the horse chestnut tree, not far from the stream. His belly rumbled greedily as he tiptoed to the front door.

Knock, knock, knock.

“Who is it?” quavered a frail voice from inside.

“It’s me, Granny. It’s your granddaughter,” said the wolf in a high, squeaking voice.

“The door’s unlocked, dear.” So Mr Wolf lifted the latch and hurried in.

Inside, Granny’s cottage looked much as you would expect: an empty cup of tea sat on the table, some half-finished knitting lay draped over her rocking chair, and the pantry door stood slightly ajar.

But one thing was not as you'd expect. Granny was nowhere to be seen.

"Is that you, Red?" croaked the old lady. With a start, the wolf noticed the shape beneath the bedclothes. Granny was tucked up in bed. Mr Wolf licked his lips. This was going to be so easy.

"Oh, Granny!" he squeaked, running to the bedside. "You're sick."

Granny's quilt was drawn right up over her nose, and her nightcap was pulled right down almost to her eyes. Her fingers gripped the top of the quilt like they were clinging on for dear life.

"Terribly sick," said Granny, coughing pathetically. "Come closer, my dear, so that I can see you."

Granny reached for her reading glasses and placed them on her nose. As the wolf padded towards the bed, the pantry door creaked.

"Oh, granddaughter, what big eyes you have!" gasped Granny, as the wolf drew closer.

"All the better to see you with, Granny," simpered the wolf.

In the pantry, Red reached for Granny's rolling pin.



"Oh, granddaughter, what big ears you have!" said Granny.

"All the better to hear you with, Granny," said the wolf, leaning down over Granny and opening his mouth wide.

In the pantry, Red gripped the rolling pin in both hands.

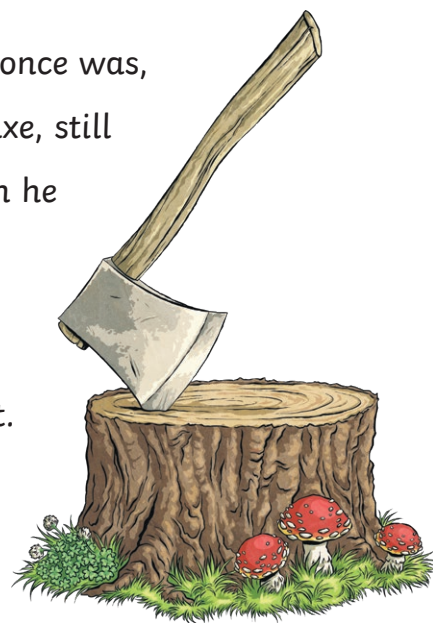
“Oh, granddaughter, what big teeth you have!” said Granny.

“All the better to eat you with!” roared the wolf. But as he pounced on Granny, Red leapt through the pantry door and brought the rolling pin crashing down onto the wolf’s head.

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The woodcutter was getting on in years. He wasn’t as spry as he once was, and his joints creaked as he walked. But he could still swing an axe, still whistle a tune, and still feel flutters of affection in his heart when he saw a pretty face.

One pretty face made his heart flutter more than any other. The lovely lady in question was a widow who lived alone in the forest. She loved to knit and baked the most delicious cakes, and though she was no spring chicken herself, to the woodcutter, her beauty was timeless. He would find any excuse he could to pay her a visit.



Her wooden cottage – which stood next to the horse chestnut tree, not far from the stream – wasn’t strictly on his route that day, but since it was such a lovely afternoon, the woodcutter thought that he’d swing by. He had even stopped to pick a bunch of yellow daffodils, their petals as bright as sunshine.

But as the woodcutter neared the cottage, he heard strange noises: heavy footsteps, puffing and panting, then the old lady’s cross voice echoing through the trees.

“Why does he have to be so heavy?”

Then, he saw them: first the old lady (his heart fluttered) and then her red-cloaked granddaughter. They were staggering through the forest, carrying a load between them. The load was huge, heavy, and covered in fur...

The woodcutter dropped his bunch of daffodils.

“Is that a wolf?”

“It certainly is,” said Granny, out of breath. “Now make yourself useful, and help us carry him far, far away from here, before he wakes up.”

Once the trio had carried the wolf far, far away, they tramped back to Granny’s cottage together for tea. Granny put the kettle on, and Red brought out her basket of cupcakes. Her stomach groaned loudly. She hadn’t eaten all day, and carrying the unconscious wolf through the forest had been hard work.

“Mother sent you these cupcakes, Granny,” Red explained, heaping the cakes onto a plate. “She was baking all morning.”

“Oh, I can’t eat all of those!” said Granny, lowering herself into her rocking chair and picking up her knitting needles. “I hope you’re both hungry. You’ll have to help me out.”

Red was so hungry, she could have eaten a wolf!

So, between them, Red, Granny and the woodcutter ate up the delicious cupcakes that Red’s mother had baked. And they all lived happily ever after.

