

Little Red Cap (A Retelling)

Once upon a time, in a shady green valley, there was a dear little girl who was loved by everyone who looked at her, but most of all by her granny. There was nothing that she would not have given to the child. Once she gave her a little cap of red velvet, which suited her so well that she would never wear anything else, so she was always called Little Red Cap.

One day her mother said to her, “Little Red Cap, here is a piece of cake and a jug of cider. Take these to your granny, for she is ill and weak. They will do her good. Set out before it gets hot, and when you are going, walk nicely and quietly and do not run off the path, or you may fall and spill the cider. And when you go into her house, don’t forget to say, ‘Good morning.’”

“I will take great care,” said Little Red Cap.

Granny lived deep in the forest, very far from the village. Just as Little Red Cap entered the wood, a wolf stepped in her path. Little Red Cap did not know what a wicked creature he was and was not at all afraid of him.

“Good-day, Little Red Cap,” he said.

“Why, thank you kindly, Wolf.”

“Why are you up so early, Little Red Cap?”

“I’m off to my grandmother’s.”

“What have you got in your apron?”

“Cake and cider. Yesterday was baking day, so poor sick granny will have something good to make her stronger.”

“Where does your granny live, Little Red Cap?”

“A good mile down the holler. Her house stands under the three large oak trees and the apple trees are just below. Surely you must know it,” replied Little Red Cap.

The wolf thought to himself, “What a tender young creature! What a nice plump mouthful. She will be better to eat than the old woman. I must be crafty, so as to catch both.”

The wolf walked for a short time by the side of Little Red Cap. After a time, he said, “Look, Little Red Cap, how pretty the flowers are here! Why do you not look round? I believe, too, that you do not hear how sweetly the little birds are singing. You walk gravely as if you were going to school, while everything else out here in the wood is merry.”

Little Red Cap raised her eyes, and when she saw the sunbeams dancing here and there through the trees, and pretty flowers growing everywhere, she thought, "Suppose I take granny a fresh bouquet. That would please her too. It is so early in the day that I shall still get there in good time." She ran from the path into the wood to look for flowers. Whenever she picked one, she imagined that she might find a still prettier one further on, and so she went deeper and deeper into the wood.

Meanwhile the wolf ran straight to the granny's house and knocked at the door.

"Who is there?"

"Little Red Cap," replied the wolf. "I am bringing cake and cider. Open the door."

"Lift the latch," called out the granny. "I am too weak and cannot get up."

The wolf lifted the latch, the door flew open, and without saying a word he pounced on the granny's bed, and devoured her. He then put on her clothes and cap, laid himself in bed, and closed the curtains.

When Little Red Cap had gathered so many flowers that she could carry no more, she remembered her granny, and set out on the way to her house.

She was surprised to find the house door standing open. When she went into her granny's room, she had such a strange feeling that she said to herself, "Oh dear! How uneasy I feel today, and at other times I like being with granny so much." She called out, "Good morning?" but received no answer. She went to the bed and drew back the curtains. There lay her granny with her cap pulled far over her face and looking very strange.

"Oh, granny," she said, "What big ears you have!"

"The better to hear you with, my child," was the reply.

"But, granny, what big eyes you have!" she said.

"The better to see you with, my dear."

"But, granny, what large hands you have!"

"The better to hug you with."

"Oh, but, granny, what a big, terrible mouth you have!"

"The better to eat you with!"

And scarcely had the wolf said this, than with one leap he was out of bed and swallowed up Little Red Cap.

When the wolf had appeased his appetite, he lay down in the bed, fell asleep, and began to snore very loudly. A hunter was just passing the house and thought to himself, "How the old woman is snoring! I must see if she is alright." So he went into the room, and when he came to the bed, he saw that the wolf was lying in it.

"So I find you here, rotten beast!" he said. "I have searched long and hard for you!" Then just as he was going to shoot him, it occurred to him that the wolf might have devoured the grandmother, and that she might still be saved, so he did not shoot. Instead he took a pair of granny's sewing scissors and began to cut open the stomach of the sleeping wolf. When he had made two snips, he saw a little red cap shining, and then he made two snips more, and the little girl sprang out, crying, "Ah, how frightened I have been! How dark it was inside the wolf." The old granny came out alive also, but scarcely able to breathe.

Little Red Cap quickly fetched big stones with which to fill the wolf's body, so that when he awoke, he wanted to run away, but the stones were so heavy that he fell down at once and died.

All three were delighted. The hunter skinned the wolf and went home with the pelt. The granny ate the cake and drank the cider and revived.

Little Red Cap thought to herself, "As long as I live, I will never leave the path to run into the wood, when my mother has forbidden me to do so."