

Contents

Chapter 3: Wolf Arrives at Grandmother's House	1
Chapter 5: The Confession and the Kiss	2
Chapter 1: Red Receives a Mysterious Letter	5
Chapter 4: Red Discovers the Deception	7
Chapter 2: Red Meets the Charming Stranger	14

Chapter 3: Wolf Arrives at Grandmother's House

The Wolf, his coat glistening with dew, emerges silently from the undergrowth and circles the cottage, keenly alert for movement.

Pausing at the stone path, he inhales the aromas from Grandmother's kitchen.

At the threshold, Grandmother, wrapped in her shawl and holding her broom, faces the Wolf with shrewd wariness.

The Wolf approaches with unhurried caution, offering a respectful nod.

Grandmother, rather than simply probing the Wolf's intentions, directly questions his purpose with pointed curiosity and subtle suspicion.

'These woods have voices of their own, Wolf.

Not every sound is meant for comfort, and not every visitor comes with kindness in their heart,' she warns.

Grandmother straightens her shawl, peering into the shadows between the trees, her eyes sharp and knowing. Grandmother straightened her shawl, her fingers deft and practiced, as she gazed into the shifting shadows between the trees. Her eyes, sharp and knowing from years spent in the woods, lingered on the darkness just beyond the cottage. "These woods have voices of their own, Wolf," she said softly, her tone carrying both warning and wisdom. "Not every sound is meant for comfort, and not every visitor comes with kindness in their heart." The words hung in the air, gentle yet edged with the firmness of someone who had seen much and trusted little that moved among the trees. She then acknowledges the rumors about the girl in red, but claims she hasn't seen her recently, and presses the Wolf for his true motivation: 'Why are you so interested in finding her?

Grandmother leans forward, her eyes narrowing with curiosity, knitting needles pausing mid-stitch. Grandmother leaned forward, knitting needles pausing mid-stitch as her keen eyes studied her visitor. There was a warmth in her voice, but also a shrewdness that came from years of dealing with both people and prowlers in these woods. "So, you've heard the whispers too," she remarked, her tone measured and careful. "People come and go, always asking after a girl in a crimson cloak." She let the words hang for a moment, a faint, knowing smile touching her lips. "I can't say I've seen her myself—not recently, anyway." Then, her gaze sharpened with curiosity and just a hint

of skepticism. “But tell me, why are you so interested in finding her? Is it worry that brings you here, or is there something else?” Is it worry that brings you here, or something else?

’ The Wolf, caught slightly off guard by her directness, masks his intentions, keeping his answers evasive.

Both remain wary;

Grandmother keeps the door closed and the Wolf lingers in uncertainty, his curiosity about Red Riding Hood only deepening.

The scene ends with Grandmother signaling that the Wolf is not yet welcome, while the Wolf retreats, intrigued by both Grandmother’s perceptiveness and the mystery surrounding Red.

As the Wolf slips away from Grandmother’s door, a sense of anticipation hangs in the air, both for him and for those he leaves behind. Red, picking up on his strange behavior, quickens her pace, her heart pounding with a mixture of worry and determination. With the forest path narrowing and dusk settling in, the stage is set for unexpected truths to surface and hidden feelings to be revealed. As Red approaches her grandmother’s house, she has no idea that the encounter awaiting her will change everything.

Chapter 5: The Confession and the Kiss

Red, having changed out of her red cloak, pours tea with steady hands, glancing sideways at the Wolf, who sits alertly on a braided rug, his tail tucked and ears perked.

Unlike the original tense confession, the Wolf enters with open vulnerability, seeking warmth and conversation, not hiding behind bravado.

He addresses Grandmother first, assuring her of his peaceful intentions and expressing gratitude for her hospitality.

The Wolf edges closer to the foot of Grandmother’s bed, offering a toothy but gentle smile, his eyes watching her intently for any sign of trust or fear. The Wolf edged closer to the foot of the bed, his movement slow, calculated—a practiced dance of charm and caution. His lips curled into a toothy, yet almost gentle, smile as he gazed at the old woman nestled among the quilts. The flicker of candlelight glinted in his eyes, revealing not only intelligence but a hint of something softer, something almost tender. “Grandmother, please, don’t be alarmed,” he began, lowering his voice to a confiding hush as if sharing a secret. “I mean no harm; I’ve only come in from the cold woods, seeking a bit of warmth—and perhaps a little conversation. The forest,” he added, his gaze never wavering from her face, “can be a lonely place, you know.” Grandmother clutches her shawl a little tighter, her eyes never leaving the Wolf as she tries to gauge his intentions. Grandmother clutched her shawl a little tighter, her keen gaze locked on the Wolf as she tried to read the truth behind his lowered voice. Though his words professed peace, she wasn’t one to take such assurances at face value—especially from a creature with his reputation. Still, warmth colored her response, even as skepticism sharpened its edge. “Oh, is that so?” she replied, voice steady but watchful. “You certainly startled me, but I suppose anyone might seek company on a chilly night.” The Wolf steps closer to the fire, his eyes flickering with a practiced warmth as he glances at Grandmother, gauging her trust. The Wolf edged closer to the fire, its warmth reflected in the

calculated gleam of his eyes as he cast a sidelong glance at Grandmother, subtle but searching for any hint of suspicion. Lowering his voice to a velvet murmur, he let a note of sincerity slip through his practiced charm. He confessed, almost apologetically, "I mean no harm; of course, and I'd hate to intrude—your cozy hearth is simply so inviting, I couldn't help but be drawn in." Grandmother pulls her shawl tighter around her shoulders, casting a wary glance at The Wolf as she settles deeper into her rocking chair. Grandmother drew her shawl more closely around her shoulders, the familiar wool a small comfort as she regarded the Wolf with eyes that missed little. Settling deeper into her rocking chair, she listened to his lowered confession. Though his words were gentle, she could not easily set aside her doubts. Still, her voice was steady and warm as she replied that if it was simply warmth and words he sought, she supposed she could spare both for a traveler—though she admitted, with a shrewd glint in her eyes, that uneasiness lingered beneath her hospitality. The Wolf seats himself gently by the fire, folding his paws together with a practiced air of sincerity, his eyes flickering with a subtle, concealed hunger. The Wolf settled himself with calculated grace by the hearth, the firelight casting sly shadows across his silvered fur. Folding his paws together, he offered Grandmother a look of disarming sincerity—one he had perfected over countless encounters in the woods. His eyes, though gentle, flickered with a hunger carefully veiled behind charm. Lowering his voice, he leaned in, letting warmth creep into his tone as he confessed, "Oh, Grandmother, your kindness warms me more than any fire could—please, let me set your mind at ease." GrandmotherThe Wolf offers a gentle, almost charming smile, keeping his paws folded politely, while Grandmother's eyes narrow ever so slightly, her hands tightening on the edge of her shawl. The Wolf offered a gentle, almost charming smile, his paws folded with an air of polite restraint. Grandmother watched him closely, her eyes narrowing just a fraction, fingers tightening on the edge of her shawl—a silent warning not lost on him. Sensing her wariness, he lowered his voice, confiding earnestly, "You see, I have no claws bared nor teeth shown—only gratitude for your hospitality, dear lady." The words drifted across the room, careful and deliberate, as if he understood that trust was something earned slowly in this house, especially from someone who had seen more than her share of clever creatures at her door. Grandmother keeps her knitting close, her hands trembling slightly as she watches The Wolf with cautious curiosity. Grandmother kept her knitting close, the needles clicking softly as her hands—steady from years of practice, yet trembling now—rested in her lap. She regarded the Wolf with a warmth that never quite relaxed into trust, her sharp eyes flickering over his features as he lowered his voice and tried to reassure her. For all his gentle words, there was a glint in his gaze that set her instincts humming. "Still," she said, her tone gentle but edged with a shrewdness that came from a lifetime of such encounters, "there's something in your eyes that makes me wonder what else you might be seeking tonight." The Wolf settles onto a stool by the hearth, folding his paws neatly, his gaze gentle yet lingering on Grandmother, as if listening intently for her response. The Wolf settled onto the creaking stool by the hearth, folding his paws with deliberate grace. His gaze lingered on Grandmother, gentle yet edged with a curiosity that betrayed his restless nature. He lowered his voice, a soft confession threading through the air. "You read me well, Grandmother," he admitted, a hint of a smile ghosting across his muzzle. "Perhaps what I'm truly seeking is a story to soothe my restless spirit. After all, your wisdom is known throughout these woods." The words hung between them, as if the fire itself paused to listen, while the Wolf's eyes searched her face not only for answers but for the promise of something deeper—a connection, or perhaps a secret worth pursuing. Grandmother narrows her eyes and folds her hands tightly in her lap, watching the Wolf with cautious suspicion. Grandmother narrowed her eyes, folding her hands tightly in her lap as she regarded the Wolf with a cautious suspicion that came from years of living alone among the unpredictable shadows of the woods. She listened to his lowered voice, his attempt at reassurance, but her wisdom made

her wary of such confessions. Stories, after all, she had in abundance—woven from seasons spent surviving clever creatures and unexpected visitors. Yet it was rare, she observed with a shrewd warmth, for those tales to draw such eager listeners from the wild itself. “Tell me, Wolf,” she asked, her tone both gentle and probing, “what is it you truly wish to hear?” The Wolf leans forward, his tone gentle, but his gaze lingers a moment too long on Grandmother, betraying a flicker of hunger beneath his polite smile. The Wolf leaned forward, the gentleness in his tone at odds with the way his gaze lingered on Grandmother—a gaze that, for all its politeness, could not quite conceal the flicker of hunger beneath his charming smile. Lowering his voice to a confidential hush, he confessed, “Only the tale of your happiest memory, Grandmother,” letting the words glide out with practiced warmth. “For such light keeps the darkness at bay—even for creatures like me.” Grandmother gives the Wolf a measured glance, her hands tightening around her shawl as she gestures toward the chair by the hearth. Grandmother regarded the Wolf with a shrewd, measured glance, her hands instinctively tightening around the edges of her shawl. After a brief pause, she gestured toward the chair by the hearth, her voice warm yet edged with caution. “If a happy tale is all you seek, settle in by the fire and I’ll share one,” she offered, her eyes never leaving his. But there was an unmistakable firmness in her tone as she added, “Just be sure you listen with ears, Wolf, and not with teeth.” Grandmother, initially startled but quickly regaining her composure, offers him both warmth and wary companionship, her skepticism softened by his candor.

The Wolf lowers his head, his paws restless in the leaf litter, eyes flickering with regret as he gazes at the moonlit clearing where she once stood. “I only wished to know her heart. Strange, isn’t it? That a creature like me, forged by hunger and solitude, can ache for something so gentle, so distant. I have prowled through shadows, listened to the softest tremors in the woods, yet the quiet thrum within her chest—her thoughts, her hopes—remained a mystery to me. How could I ask? Or would she have ever answered, if she’d seen me—not as a beast, but as a soul longing for warmth? I wonder if she ever sensed my longing, or if my silence only frightened her further away.” —The Wolf

The Wolf, instead of immediately confessing his feelings for Red, requests a story from Grandmother, revealing his longing for connection and understanding through his interest in her memories and wisdom.

Grandmother, shrewd yet empathetic, agrees, inviting the Wolf closer to the fire but reminding him she remains cautious.

As Grandmother shares a happy memory, the Wolf quietly reflects aloud about his search for Red’s heart, admitting his loneliness and desire for gentleness, exposing his vulnerability in a way that shifts the mood from suspicion to tentative trust.

Red listens, her own curiosity and empathy kindled, but does not yet make a direct gesture of affection.

The rain intensifies outside, cocooning the three in a moment of growing understanding, as the Wolf’s vulnerability gently rebalances the dynamic from caution to the beginning of connection.

As the storm rumbles on, Red’s thoughts swirl with uncertainty and a fragile hope that things may not be as dire as she feared. The uneasy truce between her and the Wolf lingers as she descends the creaking steps toward the cellar, searching for answers. In the quiet that follows, a faint tap

at the door pulls her attention—a subtle interruption that promises to change the course of her evening. Unbeknownst to Red, what awaits her is not just the truth about her grandmother, but a message that will cast new shadows over everything she thought she knew.

Chapter 1: Red Receives a Mysterious Letter

Red, wrapped in her scarlet cloak, stooped to collect eggs from the chicken coop, her boots sinking slightly into the soft, wet ground.

She paused, hearing the crunch of gravel as her mother, Maren, approached briskly, clutching a sealed, cream-colored letter.

Maren handed Red the envelope, her brows knit in concern, urging caution as she noted the unfamiliar seal.

Together, they scrutinized the symbol, which resembled a twisted wolf's head, heightening their anxiety.

Maren drew the curtains with a sharp tug as they entered the kitchen, both wary of prying eyes.

Red Riding Hood (Red) Red runs her thumb gently across the wax, her brow furrowing as she studies the intricate symbol. She glances up at her mother, voice low and cautious, the air between them tense with shared uncertainty. Red held the letter delicately between her fingers, her thumb brushing over the unfamiliar seal pressed into the wax. A furrow creased her brow as she examined the strange mark, noticing how it differed from anything she'd seen before—neither their family's crest nor any symbol known in the village. "I've never seen this seal before, Mother," she murmured, her voice colored by both curiosity and a hint of unease. She turned the envelope over, searching for a clue. "The mark... it's nothing like ours, or the village's." Questions tumbled through her mind as she glanced up at her mother, uncertainty flickering in her eyes. "Who would send us something like this, and why?" Red's Mother She steps beside Red, squinting at the seal, her hands hovering protectively near her daughter's shoulder. Red's mother stepped in close, her presence a gentle barrier between her daughter and the unknown. She squinted at the wax seal Red traced with tentative fingers, her hands hovering just above Red's shoulder as if she could ward off trouble before it struck. "Careful, Red—don't break it just yet," she murmured, her voice low and edged with concern. She leaned in, eyes narrowing on the unfamiliar symbol, ever wary of the hidden dangers she'd heard whispered about. "Let me see that symbol closer, for sometimes secrets hide in plain sight." Red Riding Hood (Red) Red holds the envelope up to the lantern light, her brow furrowed, while Maren edges closer, her hand hovering protectively near Red's shoulder. Red held the envelope up to the lantern light, her brow knitting as she studied the unfamiliar wax seal. Maren edged closer, her presence warm and protective, her hand hovering just above Red's shoulder. The seal itself caught the flicker of the flame—a shape that almost resembled a wolf's head, but twisted and strange, unsettling in its distortion. Red traced the outline with her thumb, worry shadowing her features. "It almost looks like a wolf's head, but twisted somehow..." she murmured, her voice low and thoughtful, the question hanging between them. Was this meant as a warning, or was it some kind of summons? The uncertainty lingered in the air, as thick as the shadows dancing behind the drawn curtains. Red's Mother She leans in, squinting at the seal, her hand hovering protectively over Red's shoulder. Red's mother leaned in, her eyes narrowing as she examined the strange wax seal. The impression of a wolf's head sent a ripple of unease through her. Instinctively, she let her hand hover just above Red's shoulder, a silent gesture of protection. "A

wolf's head, you say?" Her voice was low and careful, the words laced with the weight of old fears. "We must tread even more lightly," she murmured, her gaze lingering on the seal as if it might leap from the parchment, "for old enemies have long memories—and sometimes, messages like these aren't intended for the ones who find them." Red Riding Hood (Red)Red steps back from the table, clutching her cloak tighter, eyes flickering between the seal and her mother's worried face. Red stepped back from the table, fingers tightening around the folds of her cloak. The wax seal felt strange beneath her touch—a shape she didn't recognize, pressed firm and ominous into the envelope's surface. Maren's face, pale and taut, hovered at the edge of her vision as she drew the curtains closed with a sharp, uneasy motion. Red's gaze flickered between the unknown seal and her mother, her mind racing through warnings and old stories. She hesitated, weighing the hush of the room against the darkness outside. Waiting until dawn, when the shadows would thin and the forest's dangers might lose some of their teeth, seemed wiser. If this was a threat, she thought, heart thudding in her chest, she'd rather face it in the full comfort of daylight. Red expressed her curiosity and apprehension, debating whether to open the letter at dawn, when shadows are thinner, but her impatience overcame her hesitation and she broke the seal, discovering the letter addressed to her.

Red Riding Hood (Red)Red carefully unfolds the letter, glancing up at Maren's furrowed brow and anxious hands hovering near her shoulder, feeling the weight of both anticipation and her mother's worry. Red's fingers worked carefully at the brittle wax, the deep crimson seal crumbling away beneath her touch. She felt Maren's presence—a quiet, anxious weight—hovering just behind her, her mother's hands poised in midair as though she might reach out to stop her at any moment. Red glanced up, catching the furrow in Maren's brow, and tried to steady her own breath.

"The seal's broken," she murmured, her voice soft but steady enough to carry her conviction, as she turned the envelope toward her mother. "Look, it's addressed to me." Curiosity sparked in her chest, mingling with the ever-present caution her mother had instilled in her. Still, the need to know pressed stronger than her nerves. "I have to know what's inside," she insisted, her gaze flickering between the letter and Maren's worried face. "What if it's something important?" Red's MotherMaren reaches out, gently placing a hand over Red's wrist, her eyes searching Red's face for hesitation. Maren reached out, her hand gentle but firm as it settled over Red's wrist, halting her motion with quiet urgency. Her eyes searched Red's face, shadowed by concern and a mother's instinctive caution. "Red, wait," she murmured, her voice soft but edged with warning. "Sometimes secrets are kept for a reason, and not all truths are meant to be uncovered so quickly." The words lingered in the air, weighted by worry and the memories of stories she'd heard—of the forest's dangers, of mysteries better left undisturbed. Maren's posture—hovering protectively at Red's side—made clear her determination to shield her daughter, even from her own curiosity. Red Riding Hood (Red)Red leans closer to the parchment, her fingers trembling with anticipation, while Maren's hand hovers protectively over Red's shoulder, eyes narrowed in worry. Red leaned closer to the parchment, her fingers trembling with anticipation as she broke the seal. Maren's hand hovered protectively above her shoulder, her eyes narrowed in worry, as if she could ward off trouble through sheer will. Red's voice was gentle but insistent, edged with the longing that had haunted her for so long. "But I've waited so long for answers; don't you want to know, too?" she asked quietly, her gaze flickering up to meet Maren's, searching for reassurance even as she forged ahead. Red's MotherMaren gently places her hand over Red's, her eyes searching Red's face for hesitation even as the letter trembles between their fingers. Maren's hand settled softly atop Red's, her thumb tracing small circles in an attempt to steady both their nerves. The letter trembled between their fingers, its secrets sealed and heavy. Maren's gaze moved across Red's face,

searching for any flicker of uncertainty. “Of course I want to know, darling,” she murmured, her voice wrapped in warmth but edged with worry. She paused, swallowing the rest of her thought before it could slip out, then pressed on, quieter, “but I worry what the truth might cost you.” The words lingered in the hush of the kitchen, as if the walls themselves feared what revelation might come. Red Riding Hood (Red) Red leans in, fingers trembling with anticipation as she carefully unfolds the letter, her eyes darting to Maren’s anxious face. Red’s fingers trembled with anticipation as she carefully unfolded the letter, the wax seal cracking under her touch. Her eyes flicked up, meeting Maren’s anxious gaze—her mother hovering close, protective, as if she could shield Red from whatever words lay inside. But the curiosity burning in Red was unstoppable; she felt the words practically leaping off the page, meant for her alone. She couldn’t help leaning in, drawn by the sense that something vital was about to be revealed, something written just for her. Red’s Mother Maren gently places her hand over Red’s, her eyes flickering with both fear and fierce love as she braces herself for whatever revelations the letter holds. Maren gently placed her hand over Red’s, her touch warm and steady despite the trembling beneath her skin. Fear flickered in her eyes, chased quickly by the fierce love that always seemed to animate her features when it came to her daughter’s safety. She braced herself, heart thudding in her chest as Red’s curiosity flared and small fingers slipped beneath the wax seal of the letter. “I know your heart is racing, Red,” she murmured, her voice soft but unwavering. “But let me stand with you as you read—whatever’s inside, we’ll face it together.” Even as she spoke, Maren hovered protectively, determined to shield her daughter from any shadow the letter might cast, just as she had sheltered her from the dangers of the forest beyond their door. Maren, concerned for her daughter’s safety but unable to quell Red’s curiosity, insisted on standing by her side as she read, determined to face whatever secrets the letter might hold together.

As the last words of the letter settled heavily between them, Red felt the weight of her decision pressing closer. With her mind swirling with questions and her resolve hardening, she stepped beyond the threshold of her home, unaware that each step toward her grandmother’s cottage would bring her deeper into a web of deception she had yet to unravel.

Chapter 4: Red Discovers the Deception

Red, her cloak damp from the forest, steps onto the creaking porch and knocks with brittle knuckles, clutching a basket of warm bread.

The Wolf, concealed beneath Grandmother’s quilt and wearing her cap, calls out in a low, gravelly imitation of the old woman’s voice, inviting Red inside.

The Wolf, hidden beneath Grandmother’s quilt and cap, pulls the covers up to shadow his face, attempting to soften his gruff voice as he beckons Red nearer with a crooked, clawed hand barely concealed by the blanket. Concealed beneath the faded quilt, the Wolf tugged the covers higher, letting their worn shadows fall across his snout. With Grandmother’s cap perched precariously atop his ears and only the glimmer of his eyes betraying the ruse, he reached out a crooked, furred hand—just barely visible beneath the blanket’s edge. He summoned all his charm, tempering the usual growl in his voice, and beckoned softly, “Come in, dear child, the door is open.” The words rolled out smoother than he felt, laced with a practiced warmth. “I’ve been waiting for you,” he added, coaxing her closer with a languid gesture, “do come closer so I can see you better.” His gaze

lingered on Red, curious and calculating, as he watched her hesitate at the threshold, the infamous granddaughter finally within arm's reach. Red Riding Hood (Red)Red steps hesitantly into the dim room, clutching her basket, peering toward the figure beneath the covers. Red paused on the threshold, her fingers tightening around the handle of her basket. Shadows pooled in the corners of the dim room, and the figure beneath the patchwork quilt seemed oddly still. She took a cautious step closer, her eyes searching the familiar lines of her grandmother's face—only now, they seemed blurred, hidden beneath the cap pulled low. Red's voice was gentle, threaded with concern and curiosity as she peered forward. "Grandmother, your voice sounds so strange—are you feeling very unwell?" The Wolf lifts a trembling paw, beckoning Red gently closer while keeping most of his face shadowed beneath the quilt. Half-hidden beneath the patchwork quilt, the Wolf raised a trembling paw, its gesture oddly inviting despite the shadows that veiled most of his face. His voice emerged low and gruff, thick with feigned frailty as he beckoned Red closer. "Oh, my sweet," he rasped, letting just enough warmth slip into his tone to disguise the edge beneath it, "the cold has settled deep in my throat—come nearer, and you'll see it's truly me." His golden eyes, half-lidded and unreadable, watched her every move from beneath Grandmother's cap, gauging her caution and curiosity with cunning precision. Red Riding Hood (Red)Red steps hesitantly toward the bed, peering closely at the figure beneath the covers. Red paused at the threshold, heart pounding beneath her red cloak. She took a cautious step closer, the dim light catching on the quilt's faded roses as she peered at the figure nestled beneath it. Something felt off—the silhouette too angular, the breaths too deep. Yet, she forced herself forward, determined not to let fear overtake her curiosity. Blinking, she studied the face partially hidden by her grandmother's cap, her gaze drawn to the eyes—unusually large, glinting with a strange, intense light. Red's voice was soft but steady as she edged nearer, her words breaking the room's uneasy silence. "Grandmother, what big eyes you have..." The Wolf shifts beneath the covers, peering intently at Red with wide, glinting eyes, beckoning her closer with a trembling hand. The Wolf shifted beneath the heavy quilt, his form barely concealed by the faded flannel and the grandmother's cap perched precariously atop his head. His eyes, sharp and glinting with curiosity, fixed on Red with an intensity that bordered on hunger and admiration. Extending a trembling hand, he beckoned her closer, the gesture both inviting and subtly commanding. "The better to see you with, my dear," he murmured, his gravelly voice curling through the dim room—a blend of affection and something far less innocent. Red Riding Hood (Red)Red takes a cautious step closer, her brow furrowing as she peers through the dim light at the figure in bed. Red Riding Hood hesitated at the threshold, her fingers tightening around the basket as she studied the shadowy figure nestled beneath Grandmother's familiar quilt. Something was off—the shape seemed too large, the cap askew atop a head that didn't quite match her grandmother's gentle silhouette. Heart thudding, she stepped closer, narrowing her eyes to pierce the gloom. Her gaze landed on the ears poking out from beneath the cap, longer and more pronounced than she remembered. Compassion and concern mingled in her voice as she asked, wary but unwilling to jump to conclusions, "Grandmother, what big ears you have!" The Wolf nestles deeper beneath the quilt, angling his head to keep Red's gaze fixed on his face as he pats the bed invitingly. The Wolf nestled deeper beneath the quilt, careful to keep the cap pulled low over his brow. He angled his head just so, ensuring Red's curious eyes remained fixed on his face and not the twitch of his ears beneath the fabric. With a slow, inviting pat of the bed, he beckoned her closer, the gesture warm and deceptively gentle. His voice, low and gravelly, wrapped around the words as he offered them with a wolfish smile—"The better to hear you with, my child." The phrase lingered in the air, threaded with both reassurance and something just beneath the surface: a hunger, barely concealed by charm. Red Riding Hood (Red)Red inches closer to the bed, her brow furrowing as she stares at the large, clawed hands resting atop the quilt. Red inched closer to

the bed, her cautious curiosity warring with the sense of unease prickling at the back of her neck. Her gaze settled on the large, clawed hands sprawled awkwardly atop the familiar quilt—so unlike the delicate, gentle hands she remembered. Brow furrowing, she tried to mask her alarm, but the words slipped out before she could stop them. “Grandmother, what big hands you have!” Her voice trembled with a mixture of concern and disbelief, searching for reassurance in the shadowed figure beneath the cap. The Wolf stretches out a clawed hand from beneath the quilt, beckoning Red nearer with an unsettling smile. From beneath the patchwork quilt, a claw—too long, too sharp—slipped quietly into view, its invitation impossible to ignore. The Wolf, hidden beneath Grandmother’s faded bonnet, fixed Red with a gaze both magnetic and unsettling. That smile, all teeth and hunger barely veiled by charm, beckoned her closer. “The better to hold you close, my dear,” he murmured, voice gravelly and low, as if each syllable was laced with secret promise. Red Riding Hood (Red) Red takes a hesitant step closer, her eyes wide with uncertainty as she studies the teeth peeking out from beneath the quilt. Red hesitated at the edge of the bed, her fingers clutching the fold of her cloak as she peered more closely. Shadows flickered across the wrinkled quilt, and beneath it, she caught a glimpse of gleaming teeth—far too large, too sharp to belong to her gentle grandmother. Cautious but driven by her need to understand, she leaned in, her voice trembling with concern as she remarked, “Grandmother, what a big mouth you have...” The words hovered in the dim air, mingling with her uncertainty and the subtle prickle of fear along her spine. The Wolf throws off the quilt, leaping toward Red with a menacing snarl. With a sudden, predatory grace, the Wolf flung aside Grandmother’s quilt, the faded cap slipping askew as he sprang toward Red. His eyes gleamed with cunning and hunger, and a menacing snarl curled his lips. “The better to eat you with, my dear,” he growled, his voice low and gravelly—a silken threat layered atop raw intent—relishing the moment as surprise flashed across Red’s face, mingling with the fear he so expertly conjured. Red enters, her boots leaving muddy prints on the woven rug, and sets her basket on the table, pausing as she studies the unfamiliar silhouette in the bed.

The Wolf shifts, tucking his paws beneath the covers and adjusting the cap, eyes glinting from beneath the shadow.

Red, recalling Grandmother’s sharp features, questions the odd shape and voice, leaning closer and brushing the quilt with her fingers.

Red Riding Hood (Red) Red leans in, squinting, her fingers nervously tracing the edge of the quilt as she studies the figure in the bed, her brow furrowed in concern and suspicion. Red paused at the threshold of her grandmother’s dimly lit room, her hand tightening around the wicker basket she carried. A prickle of unease crept up her spine as she studied the hunched figure lying beneath the heavy quilts. Something was different—off, somehow. She stepped closer, her eyes drawn to the sharp silhouette of her grandmother’s nose, longer than she remembered. Concern flickered across Red’s face as she spoke gently, “Grandmother, are you feeling alright?” She hesitated, noting the rasp in the old woman’s reply, a roughness that hadn’t been there before. Red’s brow furrowed, her curiosity and caution mingling as she added, “Your nose looks so much longer than I remember. And your voice—it sounds so rough. Is something the matter?” Even as she voiced her worries, her compassionate nature urged her forward, but her instincts kept her movements measured and alert. The Wolf adjusts the cap lower over his brow, attempting a feeble, wheezy chuckle, while tucking the end of the quilt tighter under his chin. The Wolf, shifting restlessly beneath the quilt, tugged its edge tighter beneath his chin, as if seeking comfort in its softness. He let out a feeble, wheezy chuckle—a pitiful attempt at familiarity—and drew the cap lower over his brow, shadowing the sharp cunning in his eyes. “Ah, my dear,” he rasped, voice deliberately thin

and hoarse, “it’s just a little cold, you see, making my voice sound like this.” He managed a smile that danced somewhere between charm and mischief before adding, with a sly glance at her basket, “And as for my nose—well, I suppose that’s simply what happens with age. It helps me catch the scent of your lovely baking all the better.” Red Riding Hood (Red)Red leans in closer, her eyes narrowing as she studies the Wolf’s head under the quilt. Red Riding Hood hesitated at the edge of the bed, her curiosity piqued and her caution sharpening into focus. She leaned in closer, her gaze sweeping over the familiar quilt, then settling on the odd profile beneath it. Something was off. The ears—she remembered her grandmother’s features well, and those ears had never seemed quite so pronounced, nor had they stuck out at such an angle. Red’s voice was gentle but edged with concern as she studied the silhouette. “Grandmother, your ears seem much larger too—did they always stick out like that?” The Wolf shifts beneath the quilt, angling his head so his oversized ears are less obvious, forcing a trembling smile. The Wolf shifted uncomfortably beneath the heavy quilt, angling his massive, tufted ears in an attempt to make them seem less conspicuous. He forced a trembling smile, aware of Red’s sharp gaze lingering on every uncanny feature. When she leaned closer, her brow furrowing in suspicion at the odd shape of his head and the unfamiliar timbre of his voice, the Wolf summoned all his practiced charm. “All the better to hear you with, my dear,” he purred, letting a note of frailty tremble through the words. “These old ears must catch every soft word you say.” Red Riding Hood (Red)Red leans in, narrowing her eyes, her hand hesitating above the quilt as she peers closer at the Wolf’s unsettling gaze. Red hesitated, her hand hovering just above the faded patchwork quilt as she leaned in, studying her grandmother’s face—or what should have been her face—with a growing sense of unease. The eyes staring back at her were enormous, glinting oddly in the dim light, far too luminous and alert for the kindly old woman she remembered. Red narrowed her own eyes, her curiosity battling with an instinctive warning as she peered closer, voice gentle but edged with suspicion. “Your eyes,” she remarked quietly, “they look so big and bright, almost as if they’re glowing in this dim light... Have they always been like that?” The Wolf blinks slowly, drawing the covers higher while watching Red’s face for any sign of suspicion. The Wolf blinked slowly, his golden eyes never leaving Red as he drew the quilt a little higher, the motion casual—almost lazy, almost reassuring. He watched her closely, searching her young face for the faintest flicker of suspicion, as if he might catch and savor it before it could bloom. When she leaned in, eyes narrowed with curiosity at the odd angles of his features, he offered her a half-smile, voice gentle and smooth as silk. “Why, my dear, that’s just so I can see you more clearly, even in this shadowy room—old eyes need every bit of help they can get.” The words slipped from his tongue with practiced warmth, his tone carefully tuned to the cadence of a doting elder, even as his clever mind spun with the thrill of the game. Red Riding Hood (Red)Red hesitantly reaches out, her fingers trembling as she gently touches ‘Grandmother’s’ hand, her eyes narrowing in suspicion. Red moved closer to the bed, her basket hanging from her arm, the familiar scent of wildflowers mingling with something more musky and strange. She reached out, hesitating for a moment as her gaze fell on her grandmother’s hands resting atop the quilt—much larger than she remembered, the knuckles knobbier, the skin rough and covered with coarse, dark hair. Red’s brow furrowed, a flicker of unease passing through her. “Grandmother,” she said softly, her curiosity edged with caution, “your hands—they’re so large and covered with coarse hair; I don’t remember them ever looking so... wild.” The Wolf quickly tucks his hairy hands deeper beneath the quilt, attempting to hide them from Red’s scrutinizing gaze. The Wolf, feeling the weight of Red’s curious stare, swiftly tucked his hairy hands further beneath the quilt, letting the faded fabric conceal what he could not disguise. He met her gaze with an easy, practiced charm, his golden eyes alight with a twinkle meant to distract. “Oh, my dear,” he said smoothly, voice laced with warmth and feigned reassurance, “these hands have simply grown strong from

years of kneading dough and tending the fire—nothing to worry about.” As he spoke, he offered her a smile edged with just enough tenderness to mask the pulse of nerves beneath his skin, hoping she’d see only a devoted grandmother worn by honest work, rather than the cunning that lay coiled beneath the covers. Red Riding Hood (Red)Red hesitates, her fingers hovering just above the quilt as she leans closer, eyes fixed on the gleaming teeth. Red hesitated at the edge of the bed, her fingers hovering just above the patchwork quilt. She leaned closer, her gaze drawn irresistibly to the gleam of teeth revealed by her grandmother’s unusually wide smile. Something prickled at the back of her mind—a memory of gentle, familiar laughter, the soft curve of her grandmother’s lips. These teeth, though, were sharp and pointed, nothing like the reassuring smile she remembered. Instead of Grandmother intervening at this moment, Red grows increasingly suspicious, directly challenging the Wolf and ultimately exposing him herself.

Pressed by Red’s courage, the Wolf confesses his deception and admits to being driven by hunger, but also voices regret.

When Red demands her grandmother’s whereabouts, the Wolf reveals that Grandmother is unharmed and locked in the wardrobe.

Red compels the Wolf to release her, and Grandmother emerges, wary but unharmed.

Red Riding Hood (Red)Red stands rigid at the foot of the bed, fists clenched, voice trembling between fear and fury as she glares at the Wolf, demanding an answer. Red stood rigid at the foot of the bed, her fists clenched so tightly her knuckles blanched. The pounding of her heart thundered in her ears, yet she refused to let fear silence her. She glared at the creature sprawled beneath her grandmother’s quilt, voice trembling between fury and terror. “Enough,” she demanded, the word cracking through the silence. “I know you’re not my grandmother.” Emotion surged behind her eyes, but she held the Wolf’s gaze, refusing to look away. “Who are you, and what have you done with her?” Her words cut sharp and clear, betraying the desperate hope that honesty might pierce the ruse. “Tell me the truth—right now!” The Wolf lowers his head, his voice trembling between guilt and hunger, as his disguise slips away. The Wolf’s shoulders sagged, a tremor running through his voice as he lowered his head and let the last remnants of his disguise slip away. The bravado that had carried him thus far faltered beneath Red’s unwavering gaze, and something vulnerable flickered in his amber eyes. “No more lies, Red,” he confessed quietly, each word weighted with a mix of guilt and lingering hunger. “I am the Wolf. I tricked you because I was hungry—but it’s your courage that’s forced me to admit the truth.” The words clung to the air, both an apology and a reluctant admiration, as the tension between them shifted into uncertain territory. Red Riding Hood (Red)Red backs away, fists clenched, glaring at the Wolf with a mix of terror and fury. Red stumbled back, her fists curling tight at her sides as she glared at the Wolf, terror and fury warring in her chest. Heart pounding, she forced herself to speak, her voice trembling but resolute. “Hungry?” she demanded, eyes locked on his. The word tasted bitter. “So you would hurt my grandmother—and me—just to satisfy yourself?” The accusation hung heavy in the air, her compassion clashing with the horror of his intentions, as she braced herself for whatever truth the Wolf might reveal. The Wolf lowers his head, his voice trembling with shame as he avoids Red’s fierce gaze. The Wolf lowered his head, unable to meet Red’s fierce gaze. Shame flickered across his features, and his voice trembled, barely above a whisper. Hunger had driven him, he admitted, and in his desperation he’d let that gnawing emptiness blind him to everything else. But now, confronted by Red’s unflinching bravery, regret seeped into his words. What he had done could not be undone, and he felt the weight of it settle in his chest, heavier than any hunger. Red Riding Hood (Red)Red steps forward, her voice trembling but determined, glaring at the

Wolf and refusing to back down. Red stepped forward, her red cloak catching on a bramble but she didn't flinch, heart thudding so loudly she wondered if the Wolf could hear it. She fixed her gaze on him—steady, unwavering, her voice trembling at first, but growing firmer with every word. “Regret isn't enough,” she told him, her tone slicing through the tension like a blade. “You need to tell me where my grandmother is and help me fix what you've done.” The demand hung in the air, daring him to deflect or lie, but Red refused to back down, her compassion for her grandmother burning brighter than her fear. The Wolf steps back from Red, raising his claws in surrender, and gestures shakily towards the wardrobe. The Wolf took an instinctive step back, claws raised in a gesture of uneasy surrender, his golden eyes flickering between Red's trembling hands and the wardrobe looming behind her. A tremor ran through his voice as, with a half-hearted attempt at charm, he gestured shakily toward the stout cabinet. “She's locked in the wardrobe—unharmd, I swear,” he promised, his gaze earnest but his posture wary, as if weighing flight against confession. “I'll open it and let her out... if you promise not to scream.” Red Riding Hood (Red) Red stands firm, her fists clenched, eyes never leaving the Wolf as she gestures sharply toward the wardrobe. Red's heart thudded with a fierce rhythm, but she refused to let fear dictate her actions. Standing firm, fists clenched at her sides, she leveled a steady gaze at the Wolf—her eyes sharp, unwavering. With a quick, decisive gesture toward the wardrobe, she forced her voice to remain even and clear. She promised she'd stay quiet, but the warning in her tone was unmistakable: he was to open that wardrobe now. If he had hurt her grandmother, he would answer to Red herself. The Wolf pads over to the wardrobe, his claws trembling, and slowly swings the door open to reveal Red's grandmother, frightened but unharmd, inside. The Wolf's paw hovered for a moment over the wardrobe handle, claws trembling with a mixture of anticipation and nerves. He glanced back at Red, her eyes narrowed and her breath quickened, demanding answers. A crooked, almost apologetic smile played at his lips as he swung the door open with deliberate slowness. “Very well, Red—I'll open it now, and you can see she's safe,” he murmured, his voice a velvety promise meant to reassure, even as his own heart raced with the thrill of the reveal. Inside, Red's grandmother huddled, frightened but untouched, her gaze darting from the Wolf to her granddaughter, uncertain whether to trust the strange mixture of charm and danger radiating from her captor. The Wolf slowly opens the wardrobe, stepping back as Red rushes to embrace her grandmother, relief and anger mixing on her face. The wardrobe creaked open under the Wolf's deft claws, the heavy doors parting to reveal the trembling figure within. Red flung herself forward, arms wrapping tightly around her grandmother, relief flooding her features before anger sharpened her eyes. The Wolf stepped back, letting the scene unfold, his gaze flickering with both apology and admiration. He tipped his head, voice low but clear as he watched Red's trembling shoulders. “See for yourself—your grandmother is unharmd,” he said, offering a measured smile that wavered between sincerity and mischief. “And I am truly sorry for frightening you both.” Grandmother, protective, bars the door and keeps Red close, but allows the Wolf to explain himself after Red insists on hearing his side.

Grandmother stands firmly before the barred door, her arms crossed protectively over her chest. She gestures for Red to sit close, her gaze never leaving the Wolf, who sits hunched by the hearth. Grandmother stood firm before the barred door, arms crossed protectively over her chest—a silent signal that her home was no place for carelessness. With a steady, unwavering gaze fixed on the Wolf, now hunched and subdued by the hearth, she beckoned Red to her side. “The door stays shut,” she declared, her voice low but resolute, “and no one crosses my threshold uninvited—beast or man.” Her eyes softened as Red hesitated, but the wisdom in her face only grew clearer. She patted the spot beside her, intent on putting distance between her granddaughter and danger. “Come

here, child, away from him.” Grandmother’s tone carried the weight of years spent outwitting clever creatures, but there was warmth beneath her skepticism. “I’ve lived too long to trust a wolf with soft words, no matter how sorry he looks.” She drew Red close, her protective embrace making her meaning unmistakable. “My only hope is to keep you safe, even if it means a heart grown suspicious.” The WolfRed hesitates in the middle of the room, glancing between Grandmother and the Wolf, her hands clenching and unclenching at her sides. Red lingered in the center of the room, her gaze flickering uneasily between Grandmother’s rigid frame barring the door and the Wolf’s languid form stretched near the hearth. Her hands tightened at her sides, then loosened, betraying the storm of doubts swirling within her. The old woman’s wary eyes implored caution, but Red’s voice trembled with conviction as she finally spoke. If they only listened to what frightened them, she wondered aloud, how could anyone ever hope to understand what truly lay beneath the fur—or the fear itself? The Wolf lowers his head, ears flattened, his eyes pleading as he sits near the hearth, keeping a wary distance from Grandmother and Red. The Wolf lowered his head, ears pressed back in a rare gesture of humility, and settled near the hearth—a careful distance from both Grandmother and Red. The firelight flickered, casting uneasy shadows across his gray fur. His eyes, so often sharp and calculating, now shimmered with something close to vulnerability as he looked between the two women. For once, his voice lost its usual teasing lilt, replaced by a raw candor. He did not beg, but confessed: he had never asked to be the villain in their stories. Hunger, not hatred, had driven him here. If only they would hear him out, perhaps they might see there was more to him than a set of gleaming teeth. Red Riding Hood (Red)Red edges forward, her eyes searching the Wolf’s face for truth, while her hand remains close to Grandmother’s. Red edged forward, her eyes searching the Wolf’s face as if she might find honesty buried somewhere beneath fur and fang. She kept her hand close to Grandmother’s, fingers curling protectively. The air in the cottage was tight with unspoken fears as Grandmother barred the door and the Wolf slunk to the hearth, his shadow stretching long across the floorboards. Red’s voice was gentle but unwavering as she addressed him, the words shaped by genuine curiosity and a cautious hope. “Wolf, I am listening—tell me,” she asked, “if you could choose differently, would you still prowl these woods for prey, or is there more to your hunger than teeth and shadow?” The Wolf lowers his head, eyes flickering with regret, while Grandmother grips Red’s hand tighter, her gaze unwavering and wary. The Wolf lowered his head, his eyes flickering with a rare glimmer of regret. At the other end of the room, Grandmother gripped Red’s hand tighter, her gaze unwavering and wary—her body forming a barrier between the girl and the hearth where the Wolf now slunk. Shadows danced along the walls as he spoke, his voice stripped of bravado and edged with longing. If he could choose, he mused aloud, he would trade hunger for peace; yet when the cold bit deeper than conscience, even a wolf found himself dreaming of forgiveness. The words lingered in the air, haunting and honest, as the fire crackled and Grandmother barred the door against the night. Red Riding Hood (Red)Red sits between the hearth and the barred door, glancing from Grandmother’s stern face to the Wolf’s lowered eyes, her fingers nervously tracing the edge of her red cloak as she weighs their words. Red settled herself uneasily between the hearth’s glow and the heavy, barred door, her eyes flitting from Grandmother’s rigid, watchful posture to the Wolf’s hunched silhouette by the fire. She drew her red cloak tighter, fingertips worrying the worn edge as she tried to steady her breath. She could feel Grandmother’s fear pulsing in the room, sharp as nettles, and beneath it, the Wolf’s shame weighing down the air. Compassion and caution warred inside her, but she forced herself to speak clearly, heart thudding. She acknowledged Grandmother’s trembling warnings, her voice gentle yet unwavering, and then turned to the Wolf, her gaze meeting his lowered eyes with a flicker of understanding. “I hear your fears, Grandmother, and Wolf, I sense your regret,” she said, her words deliberate, shaped by both empathy and resolve. “If I must decide your fate, let it be

with eyes wide open to both the danger and the desperation before me.” The chapter ends with Red, having confronted both danger and compassion, preparing to decide the Wolf’s fate, guided by both her grandmother’s caution and her own empathy.

As the uneasy silence settles within the cottage, Red’s heart remains heavy with uncertainty, her mind replaying the tension of the confrontation. Yet, even as she seeks answers within the familiar walls, an unexpected presence stirs just beyond the threshold, heralding the arrival of someone entirely new. The path ahead, once shadowed by deception, now beckons her toward a stranger whose charm promises both intrigue and unforeseen consequences.

Chapter 2: Red Meets the Charming Stranger

Red, gripping the woven basket at her side, paused to adjust her crimson cloak and scan the undergrowth for the shortcut to her grandmother’s cottage.

She crouched to inspect a cluster of wild violets, intent on gathering them for her grandmother.

Suddenly, a large, gray-furred Wolf emerged from the shadows, his amber eyes fixed on Red.

The Wolf circled just beyond arm’s reach, tail flicking, and dipped his head in a mock bow.

’A pleasant morning for a stroll, isn’t it?

’ he said, voice smooth and edged with curiosity.

Red straightened, keeping the basket between them, and answered cautiously, ’It is.

I’m just picking flowers for someone special.

’ The Wolf, motivated by intrigue and the tales he’d heard of the girl in red, padded closer, sniffing the air and letting the sunlight glint off his sharp teeth.

The Wolf crouches low in the underbrush, amber eyes fixed on the distant figure, ears twitching to catch every soft footstep, tail flicking with anticipation. Crouched low in the emerald tangle, the Wolf’s amber eyes traced every deliberate step the figure in red made along the winding path. He had heard endless whispers in the woods about her—her innocence, her sweetness, her unblemished trust in the world. She moved as though fear were a foreign language, as if the forest itself bent gently around her like a garden spun for her alone. How curious, the Wolf mused, and how tempting. His tail flicked, betraying a pulse of anticipation. What secrets might the famous girl in red reveal to a clever tongue? And perhaps, more delicious still, what delights awaited in unraveling her story firsthand? The Wolf drew a breath, scenting not only her presence but the tantalizing promise of discovery, and padded closer, compelled by intrigue and the thrill of the unknown. The Wolf slinks closer behind a thicket, ears pricked, his gaze fixed hungrily on the girl in red. The Wolf slunk closer, his lean form weaving through the thicket with practiced stealth. Ears pricked and nose twitching, he let his gaze linger hungrily on the girl in red, her presence more captivating than any tale he’d heard whispered through the woods. Perhaps, he mused, a little conversation would loosen her guard—let him peer into the depths behind those bright, curious eyes. The thought flickered through him, half impulse, half calculation, as he weighed charm against caution, already savoring the possibilities that danced just out of reach. He offered to show Red a hidden patch of sweeter berries, subtly testing her trust.

Red, wary yet drawn by curiosity, hesitated, then shook her head and stepped back onto the path. The Wolf watched her movements, ears twitching, measuring her responses before melting back into the underbrush with a lingering glance.

Their brief, guarded exchange left Red more alert as she continued her walk, while the Wolf, impressed by her caution, slunk away to plot another encounter.

As Red disappeared beneath the canopy's dappled light, the woods settled into a hush, holding close the secrets of a morning when innocence and cunning met—and parted, each changed in ways the forest alone would remember.