

Contents

Chapter 7: Truths and Choices Revealed	1
Chapter 3: A Chance Meeting with the Wolf	2
Chapter 1: Red Receives a Mission from Her Mother	2
Chapter 5: Red’s Suspicion Grows	3
Chapter 4: Wolf Arrives at Granny’s Cottage	5
Chapter 2: Red Encounters the Mysterious Woodsman	6
Chapter 6: The Woodsman Intervenes	11

Chapter 7: Truths and Choices Revealed

Red steps onto the narrow path with her basket, determined to reach her grandmother’s cottage and demonstrate her independence.

Luc, axe over his shoulder, emerges from behind an oak and offers to accompany her, warning of the woods’ dangers.

Unlike before, Red now actively invites Luc to stay close, recognizing the risks of the journey and accepting his protective presence more willingly.

Luc reassures her, expressing his sense of duty and deeper emotional investment in her safety.

Red acknowledges her desire to prove herself capable but also admits to feeling the weight of others’ concerns.

Luc (The Woodsman) Luc steps just within the edge of moonlight, his hand resting on the worn leather strap of his satchel, eyes alert as he surveys the shifting darkness between the trees. Luc paused at the edge of moonlight, the worn leather strap of his satchel creaking quietly beneath his hand. His gaze swept the restless shadows between the trees, instinctively searching for movement. He stepped closer to Red, lowering his voice to a gentle rumble that barely disturbed the hush of the forest. It wasn’t wise for anyone—least of all her—to wander these woods alone, especially with night pressing in. “I can walk with you, if you’d like,” he offered, his eyes lingering on the darkness beyond. The forest, he knew all too well, wasn’t always kind to strangers. The two proceed together, Red remaining alert but leaning more on Luc’s support and experience, deepening their mutual trust and setting the stage for future challenges and evolving dynamics between independence and companionship.

As the shadows lengthen and the forest seems to close in around them, Red and Luc move forward, their footsteps weaving new paths through uncertainty and hope. The peace of shared understanding lingers, yet the woods remain unpredictable—each moment heavy with possibility. Just as Red begins to trust the quiet, the world shifts once more, drawing her toward an encounter she cannot foresee but will not be able to ignore.

Chapter 3: A Chance Meeting with the Wolf

Red is not present in this scene as described in the dialogue.

Instead, the Wolf is alone in the woods, sensing an unfamiliar presence nearby.

He becomes increasingly wary, speaking aloud to the unseen watcher, suspecting either an old fox or a stranger with unusual cunning.

The Wolf's monologue reveals his vulnerability and heightened senses as he tries to identify the intruder, who remains hidden.

The encounter ends without Red appearing;

the Wolf remains unsettled and alert, foreshadowing a future meeting with a character whose presence challenges him.

As the forest settles once more into uneasy silence, the Wolf disappears among the shadows, his mind still tangled with questions and anticipation. Meanwhile, beyond the tangled woods and far from the Wolf's watchful gaze, Red's own story is quietly unfolding. Not yet aware of the creature trailing her path, she is about to set out from home, guided by her mother's gentle instructions and a sense of purpose that will soon draw her into the heart of the forest's secrets.

Chapter 1: Red Receives a Mission from Her Mother

Red stands at the kitchen table, tying the red cloak beneath her chin as her mother packs a woven basket with fresh bread, a jar of honey, and a folded letter.

Her mother, voice steady but eyes lingering on the window, instructs Red to deliver the basket and letter to Granny, who has fallen ill in her cottage deep in the woods.

Red's Mother hands Red the basket, her voice calm but her gaze drifts anxiously to the view beyond the window, fingers tightening around the folded letter. Red's mother pressed the woven basket into her daughter's hands, her voice composed and unwavering even as her gaze flickered anxiously to the world beyond the window. She lingered there a moment, fingers unconsciously tightening around the neatly folded letter she was about to entrust to Red. "Take these to your grandmother right away," she instructed, the affection in her tone tempered by a familiar edge of caution. "She hasn't been well, and I worry about her in that cottage all alone, so far from anyone." Turning back to Red, her eyes searched her daughter's face for a sign of understanding. "Go straight there, don't dawdle along the path." Her hand hovered at Red's shoulder, an unspoken plea in her touch. "Promise me you'll be careful." Red takes the basket with both hands, glancing from her mother's anxious face to the shadowed woods beyond the window. "I promise, Mother—I'll go straight there and bring Granny whatever she needs." —Red

She cautions Red, pointing to the edge of the forest visible through the window, reminding her to stay on the marked path and not speak to strangers.

Red's Mother glances anxiously toward the edge of the forest, her voice firm but caring, as she places a gentle hand on Red's shoulder. Red's mother paused at the threshold, her gaze straying anxiously to the shadowed edge of the forest visible through the kitchen window. She laid a gentle,

steadying hand on Red's shoulder, her touch both reassuring and insistent. "You remember what I've always told you," she said, her voice low and firm, shaped by years of caution and care. "Stay on the marked path—don't wander, no matter what you see or hear. And above all, never speak to strangers." Her eyes lingered on the distant trees, the worry etched in the lines of her face. "There are dangers in those woods, Red, dangers you can't imagine." Red nods earnestly, glancing out the window toward the shadowy line of trees. "I understand, Mother—I'll keep to the path and won't talk to anyone I don't know, I promise." —Red

Red listens attentively and reassures her mother with repeated promises not to stray from the path nor speak to anyone she does not know, showing her determination to follow instructions and her sense of responsibility.

Red's mother presses the basket into her daughter's hands, squeezing her fingers with urgency, reminding her to return before nightfall.

Red's MotherShe presses the basket into Red's hands, her fingers lingering for a moment as she meets her daughter's eyes, voice trembling with urgency. Red's mother pressed the basket into her daughter's hands, her grip lingering with a trembling urgency. She searched Red's eyes, her own voice low and insistent as she said, "Hold this tight, promise me." The words came out thick with worry, shaped by all she'd lost and all she loved. "You'll go straight there and come straight home—no wandering, you hear?" Her thumb brushed Red's knuckles, and her gaze flickered toward the woods beyond the door, shadowed and shifting. "The woods change after sunset," she warned, practical and pleading at once. "It's not safe. You must be back before nightfall, no matter what." She squeezed Red's fingers one last time, as if to anchor her daughter to the safety of home. Red clutches the basket to her chest, meeting her mother's anxious gaze with a solemn nod. "I promise, Mama—I'll hurry and won't stray from the path, I swear." —Red

Red nods, hefts the basket, and steps out the creaking door, the scent of dew-soaked grass rising as she sets her boots on the narrow woodland trail, determined to complete her errand swiftly and prove her responsibility.

This time, Red's focus remains firmly on her task, her yearning for the village dance tempered by her promises to her mother.

As Red moves deeper into the woods, the hush of morning is broken only by the crunch of twigs beneath her boots and the distant call of birds overhead. Each step away from home sharpens her awareness of the shadows gathering beneath the trees, and she finds herself glancing over her shoulder, recalling her mother's warnings. Despite her resolve, a faint unease begins to settle within her, growing with every rustle in the underbrush and every unfamiliar sound echoing through the forest.

Chapter 5: Red's Suspicion Grows

Red steps over the threshold, her boots squeaking on the warped floorboards, a wicker basket clutched tightly in her hand.

She glances at the bed, noting how the blankets are pulled high and Granny's cap is set oddly askew.

The Wolf, hidden beneath the covers, adjusts the cap with a careful paw, mimicking Granny's voice as he greets her.

WolfThe Wolf tucks the covers higher under his chin, peering out with wide, eager eyes, and forces his voice into a soft, quavery imitation of Granny's gentle tone, though a note of impatience slips in at the end. The Wolf tucked the covers higher beneath his chin, his paws trembling just a touch as he nestled deeper into the bed's warmth. With a careful adjustment of Granny's cap, he peered out, amber eyes wide and alight with barely contained excitement—part nerves, part wicked delight. Summoning up every ounce of his mimicry, he softened his voice to a wavering, grandmotherly murmur, though a flicker of impatience edged his words. "Come in, dearie, come in! My, my, what a surprise to see you so early." He let the invitation linger, then added, unable to disguise his eagerness, "The door's unlocked—just give it a gentle push, won't you, child?" Red sets the basket down on the table and moves closer, sniffing the air, her brows knitting at the unfamiliar scent.

She leans in, ostensibly to check Granny's temperature, but her eyes linger on the shape of the hands and the glint of sharp teeth barely concealed by the quilt.

The Wolf, sensing her scrutiny, pulls the blanket higher, feigning a shiver and asking for the soup Red has brought.

WolfThe Wolf huddles deeper under the blanket, giving a convincing shiver, and peers up at Red with watery, pleading eyes. The Wolf burrowed deeper beneath the blanket, letting a theatrical shiver ripple through his frame. His eyes, glistening and wide, sought Red's with a practiced vulnerability. "Ah, my dear child," he murmured, voice trembling just enough to tug at her sympathy. "This chill has settled right into these old bones." He peered up at her, gaze lingering hopefully on the bundle in her hands. "Did you bring the soup, as I'd wished?" His paw—clumsy, deliberately unsteady—nudged the edge of the blanket higher. "Would you mind coming closer and setting it by my bedside? My hands aren't quite steady enough today." Red ladles soup into a bowl, her hands steady, but she asks pointedly about Granny's 'changed voice' and 'big hands,' her tone light but her gaze unwavering.

Red (Little Red Riding Hood)Red carefully ladles soup into Granny's bowl, her hands steady, eyes flicking up to study Granny's face as she speaks. She offers a gentle smile, but there's a sharpness in her gaze that belies her casual tone. Red stepped quietly into the cozy cottage, her basket swinging gently at her side. The familiar scent of herbs and old wood wrapped around her, comforting yet tinged with an uneasy note she couldn't quite place. She approached the bedside, noticing how her grandmother's quilt barely moved with each breath. A frown creased Red's brow as she listened to the older woman speak—a voice she knew so well, now strangely rough, almost scratchy, as if a cold wind had passed through it.

Biting her lip, Red leaned forward, concern knitting her features. "Granny," she said softly, her eyes searching the pale face for signs of fever or fatigue, "is your throat feeling alright today?" The words slipped out, gentle but probing, her curiosity piqued by the difference she heard. "Your voice sounds different—a bit rougher than I remember. Have you caught a cold?" Red's hand hovered near her grandmother's, ready to offer comfort or fetch warm broth if needed, her heart determined to care for the one she loved. The Wolf, motivated to maintain his disguise and win Red's trust, responds with a raspy explanation about a cold and old age, forcing a cough and clutching the blanket tighter.

WolfThe Wolf pulls the blanket up to his chin, lets out a wheezy cough, and gives a weak, trembling smile, trying to appear frail and harmless. The Wolf tugged the blanket higher, nestling into its folds as if seeking shelter from more than just the chill in the air. He let out a rasping, theatrical cough, his amber eyes glinting with mischief even as he offered a tremulous, almost pitiable smile. “Ah, this wretched cold,” he murmured, his voice roughened by forced weakness, “and these old bones—years haven’t been kind to me.” He paused to clear his throat, feigning another bout of hoarseness. “My voice isn’t what it was, and I suppose I look rather peculiar today. It’s only this illness and weariness, nothing more.” He beckoned with a trembling paw, his gaze fixed on Red’s face, as if inviting her closer was an act of necessity rather than cunning. “Come nearer, child,” he coaxed softly, “so I won’t have to strain myself.” As Red hands over the bowl, she brushes her fingers against the Wolf’s paw, feeling the coarse fur beneath the glove, and subtly pulls back.

The rain outside grows heavier, masking the tension in the room as Red, motivated by suspicion and a need for proof, edges toward the window, pretending to adjust the curtains while keeping the Wolf in sight.

The scene ends with the Wolf sipping the soup, eyes following Red warily, both locked in a silent contest of vigilance.

Unspoken questions hang in the thick air as the storm deepens, each roll of thunder echoing the uncertainty between them. Yet outside these walls, the path that led the Wolf here begins to unravel, carrying its own secrets and shadows toward Granny’s cottage. As Red and the Wolf measure each other’s intentions, the story rewinds, tracing pawprints back through the forest, to the moment the Wolf first approached the quiet, unsuspecting home at the edge of the woods.

Chapter 4: Wolf Arrives at Granny’s Cottage

Wolf prowled around the edge of the clearing, his paws silent on the leaf-littered ground as he circled the cottage, testing the wind for unfamiliar scents.

His nose twitched, catching the aroma of baking bread and herbal salves seeping from the cracks in the shutters.

Driven by his desire to impress Red and test the humans’ cleverness, he padded to the doorstep and tapped the door with a calculated gentleness.

Inside, Granny paused her knitting, set her needles aside, and approached the door with measured steps, cane tapping on the worn planks.

She cracked the door open, squinting through the gloom, her voice sly and steady: ‘Not many visitors come by this early—what brings a wolf to my doorstep?’

‘ Wolf dipped his head, baring a practiced, nonthreatening grin, and replied, ‘I’ve heard tales of your wisdom, old one.

I come seeking advice for a friend lost in the woods.

‘ Granny studied him, her sharp gaze lingering on his twitching ears, then stepped back, gesturing him in.

As Wolf crossed the threshold, he brushed against a hanging sprig of lavender and scanned the cozy room for signs of Red's imminent arrival, his tail flicking with anticipation.

Their exchange set the stage: Granny, wary yet intrigued, offered him a seat by the fire, while Wolf, ever watchful, positioned himself to observe both door and window, already plotting his next move.

Outside, the afternoon sun filtered through the dense trees, casting shifting shadows along the winding path Red would soon follow. As the Wolf settled into his borrowed disguise within the cottage, fate was already weaving a new encounter in the forest beyond. Not far from the cottage's doorstep, Red paused on her journey, unaware of the ruse awaiting her and of the unexpected figure she was about to meet among the whispering pines.

Chapter 2: Red Encounters the Mysterious Woodsman

Red steps off the worn footpath, basket swinging at her side, pausing to examine a cluster of scarlet mushrooms growing beneath a fallen log.

As she crouches to inspect them, Luc emerges from behind a mossy tree, axe slung over his shoulder, boots crunching on the soil.

He clears his throat to announce his presence, then gestures toward the mushrooms, warning her with a low, steady voice about their poisonous nature.

Luc (The Woodsman) Luc clears his throat to get Red's attention, then points with his axe handle toward a cluster of mushrooms edging the path, his voice low and sure. Luc cleared his throat, the quiet rumble of it breaking through the hush beneath the trees. From where he stood, he caught Red's eye and tipped his chin toward the edge of the path, motioning with the handle of his axe. His voice was low, steady—a quiet warning layered beneath a gruff exterior. "Careful where you step, Red." He nodded at the cluster of mushrooms that pressed up from the leaf mold, crimson caps spattered with white. "Those—see the red ones? They're poison. Even a touch can make you sick." His gaze lingered on her boots, making sure she registered the danger before he let his hand fall back to his side. Red (Little Red Riding Hood) Red hesitates mid-step, pulling her foot back and peering at Luc with wide-eyed curiosity. Red hesitated mid-step, her worn boot hovering above a patch of moss as Luc's sudden cough broke the hush of the woods. She pulled back, heart fluttering, and turned to find him standing among the trees, one hand raised in a gentle warning toward the cluster of pale mushrooms at her feet. Curiosity sparked in her wide eyes as she studied both the fungi and the boy before her. "Oh—I had no idea they were so dangerous," she admitted, voice low with a mix of surprise and respect. Her gaze lingered on Luc, searching for answers. "How do you know so much about them?" Luc (The Woodsman) Luc kneels beside the mushrooms, pointing out crushed earth where a small animal once lay, his expression grave. Luc cleared his throat, a low sound that stirred Red from her quiet study of the forest floor. Kneeling beside a cluster of mushrooms, he traced the outline of crushed earth with a careful finger, his brow furrowed in concern. "I've lived in these woods longer than most," he said quietly, the weight of experience carried in his voice as he gestured to the subtle indentations where a small animal had met trouble. "Seen what happens when a creature gets too curious." His eyes lingered on Red, protective and intent, as if urging her to heed the silent warning hidden among the moss

and shadows. Red (Little Red Riding Hood) Red draws her cloak tighter, eyeing the mushrooms with new caution, her voice dropping to a whisper. Red drew her scarlet cloak tighter around her shoulders, a shiver running down her spine as she eyed the cluster of mushrooms with newfound caution. Her gaze flicked to the stranger who had just cleared his throat, his warning lingering in the crisp air. Lowering her voice to a whisper, she asked, “What happens to them—do they get very sick, or is it worse than that?” The question hung between them, heavy with concern and a hint of dread, as she studied the mushrooms’ mottled caps, determined to understand the danger that lurked so close to home. Luc (The Woodsman) Luc fixes Red with a serious gaze, his hand resting protectively on the handle of his axe as he steps between her and the mushrooms. Luc stepped forward, placing himself squarely between Red and the patch of strange mushrooms, his hand resting with quiet purpose on the handle of his axe. He cleared his throat, the sound low and deliberate, drawing her attention before gesturing toward the pale clusters nestled in the moss. His gaze held a seriousness that made Red pause. “Worse—I’ve found more than one fox or squirrel lying still beside a patch like this, never to wake again,” he warned, his voice carrying both caution and a gentler concern beneath its rough edge. Red, less experienced with the mushrooms than previously indicated, expresses surprise and curiosity, asking Luc how he knows so much.

Red (Little Red Riding Hood) Red straightens up, brushing dust from her skirt, her eyes glinting with a mix of caution and certainty as she glances towards the thicket. Red straightened up, brushing the dust from her skirt with a firm swipe, her posture growing taller and more assured. Her eyes, sharp and unafraid, flickered toward the shadowy thicket where the tracks cut through the undergrowth. “I’ve seen tracks like these before,” she said, her voice edged with a wry certainty that matched the slight smile curving her lips. “That’s a Silverback Direwolf—definitely not one of the usual mutts prowling these woods.” She paused, glancing back at the prints as if measuring their distance and depth. “Most folks don’t realize just how far they wander.” Luc (The Woodsman) Luc crosses his arms, brow raised in genuine curiosity, eyeing Red with newfound respect. Luc shifted his weight, crossing his arms over his broad chest, his brow lifting in genuine curiosity as he regarded Red. He couldn’t help but eye her with a newfound respect—most folks wouldn’t have recognized what she’d just described, let alone named it. “A Silverback, huh?” he said, voice low and thoughtful. The words lingered between them, more observation than question. He studied her a moment longer, as if searching for the roots of her knowledge. “Not many around here would know the difference. How’d you come by that sort of know-how?” Red (Little Red Riding Hood) Red dusts off her hands and glances back at the fading paw prints, her tone matter-of-fact but edged with experience. Red dusted her hands against her skirt, the earth clinging stubbornly to her palms. As she straightened, her eyes traced the fading outline of paw prints in the mud—a sign she recognized all too well. With a wry smile tugging at the corner of her mouth, she glanced over her shoulder, her tone matter-of-fact, edged by a quiet resilience earned through experience. Close encounters, she reflected, were nothing new to her. She had crossed paths with wolves before—often enough to have learned their habits the hard way. Luc (The Woodsman) Luc leans in, crossing his arms and giving Red a searching look, curiosity clearly piqued. Luc leaned in, crossing his arms as he studied Red with a searching gaze, curiosity flickering behind his steady eyes. He’d seen enough greenhorns stumble through the woods, boasting skills they didn’t have, but Red’s wry smile and the way she brushed dirt from her skirt told him she was different. “That’s more than most trappers around here can claim,” he mused quietly, his voice carrying a note of respect as well as challenge. “So,” he added, not breaking eye contact, “what else do you know about these Silverbacks that I ought to?” The question hung in the air, edged with genuine concern—and something softer, just for her. Red (Little Red Riding Hood) Red stoops to examine

a snapped twig, her gaze sweeping the shadowy treeline with practiced caution. Red stooped low, fingers brushing against the snapped twig, her eyes scanning the shadowy treeline with a wariness born from years of her mother's warnings. Rising to her feet, she brushed the dirt from her skirt and let a wry smile tug at her lips. "They favor moonlit nights," she murmured, her voice low but confident, as if imparting a lesson she'd learned well. "And they never hunt alone. If you spot one, its pack is never far behind." Her gaze lingered on the shifting shadows, every muscle alert, determined not to let fear overtake her curiosity or resolve. Luc explains his experience in the woods and shares cautionary tales.

Their conversation shifts to animal tracks, with Red showing unexpected knowledge about the Silverback Direwolf, revealing she's had personal encounters and understands their pack behavior.

Luc (The Woodsman) Luc gestures with his walking stick down a narrow, mossy trail, his eyes cool and steady as he waits for Red's reply, the dappled light flickering over his face. Luc paused at the edge of the narrow, moss-veiled trail, leaning lightly on his walking stick. Dappled sunlight flickered across his weathered face as he let his gaze linger on Red, cool and steady. "These woods can be tricky if you don't know the paths, mademoiselle," he said, his voice low and reassuring, every word shaped by experience. He gestured down the shadowed trail—a route seldom touched by hunters. "I've spent many years beneath these trees," he continued, the weight of his quiet confidence settling between them. "There's a shortcut I know, one the others never use. If you'd like, I can show you. It'll bring you to your grandmother's door before the sun climbs too high." His tone held a gentle promise, a subtle invitation woven with concern and a hint of something more. Red (Little Red Riding Hood) Red tilts her head, her basket held close, eyes flickering between Luc and the shadowy trail he gestures toward. Red tilted her head, clutching her basket a little tighter as her gaze flickered between Luc's easy smile and the shadowed trail he indicated. The air beneath the trees was cooler, denser with secrets. "That sounds helpful, monsieur," she said carefully, recalling her mother's stern warnings, "but Mama always told me to stay on the main path." Her eyes narrowed slightly, searching his face for any sign of mischief. "Why do the hunters avoid your shortcut?" Luc (The Woodsman) Luc offers a reassuring smile, gesturing invitingly toward a narrow, leafy trail barely visible between the trees. Luc's reassuring smile softened the rough lines of his face as he gestured toward a barely discernible path, its entrance half-hidden by brambles and the dappled shade of overhanging branches. "The hunters," he said quietly, his voice carrying the certainty of experience, "stick to the wide-open trails, where their quarry has nowhere to hide." He let his hand linger, inviting her to follow as he continued, "But my way hugs the stream—quieter, shaded, and not so easily found by those with heavy boots." There was a gentle confidence in the way he offered the shortcut, as if he'd long ago measured every risk these woods could offer, and meant to shield her from them all. Red (Little Red Riding Hood) Red tilts her head, her grip tightening slightly on her basket as she glances toward the shaded path Luc gestures to. Red tilted her head, her grip tightening slightly on the woven handle of her basket as she glanced toward the shaded path Luc had indicated. The promise of the stream's gentle burble was tempting, but her mother's words echoed in her mind—warnings about the secrets that quiet places could keep. Still, curiosity warred with caution in her chest. "I suppose the stream does sound lovely," she said, her voice measured, "but Mama always says quiet places can hold secrets—do you truly think it's safe?" Luc (The Woodsman) Luc offers a reassuring smile, extending his hand with an inviting gesture toward the shaded, winding trail. Luc offered her a reassuring smile, the kind that softened the stern lines of his face, and extended his calloused hand invitingly toward the shaded, winding trail. "You have my word, mademoiselle," he said, his voice low and steady, "the only secrets this path keeps are those of birds and wildflowers." His gaze

lingered on her a moment, earnest beneath the brim of his hat. “And I would not let harm come to you.” There was a quiet certainty in the way he spoke, a promise woven into the gentle strength of his gesture as he waited for her to join him beneath the sheltering branches. Red (Little Red Riding Hood)Red tugs her red cloak tighter, peering up at Luc with cautious curiosity as she steps just a little closer to him. Red hesitated at the edge of the path, her fingers tightening around her crimson cloak as Luc’s offer hung in the air. The woods loomed darker beyond him, but curiosity flickered in her eyes. She tilted her head, studying his face for the hint of fox’s cunning she’d always been told to watch for. Yet the wildflowers clustered at his feet seemed innocent enough. Stepping just a bit closer, she spoke with a careful resolve, “If you promise to walk with me and point out the wildflowers, monsieur, I suppose I could see your shortcut for myself.” Her voice was steady, though her heart beat faster with anticipation. Luc, impressed, asks for more insight and then offers to guide her on a lesser-known shortcut, explaining its safety and the reasons hunters avoid it.

Red, cautious due to her mother’s warnings, asks probing questions about the shortcut’s safety.

Red (Little Red Riding Hood)Red glances sideways at Luc, her red cloak brushing against low-hanging branches as she steps carefully over a fallen log, her basket swinging lightly in her hand. Red glanced sideways at Luc, her red cloak brushing against the low-hanging branches as she stepped carefully over a fallen log, the basket swinging lightly in her hand. The rhythmic crunch of twigs beneath their boots seemed louder with every step, filling the silence that had crept in as they ventured deeper into the woods. She tilted her head, curiosity flickering in her eyes. It was odd, she thought—the farther they walked, the quieter the birds became, as if the forest itself were holding its breath.

“I always thought this part of the forest was supposed to be safe,” she murmured, her tone thoughtful, almost cautious. “But today it feels different.” Her gaze lingered on Luc, searching his expression for reassurance. “Do you come this way often?” she asked, her strong-willed nature pushing her to seek answers despite the uneasy hush around them. Luc (The Woodsman)Luc glances sidelong at Red, his hand resting near the axe at his belt as a low breeze stirs the leaves overhead. Luc glanced sidelong at Red, his hand instinctively resting near the axe at his belt as a low breeze stirred the leaves overhead. They walked in step, the steady crunch of twigs beneath their boots a quiet rhythm through the hush of the forest. “Aye, more often than most,” he murmured, his voice rough but earnest. His gaze swept the shifting shadows ahead, ever alert. “Though the woods never offer quite the same welcome twice—best we keep our wits about us.” Red (Little Red Riding Hood)Red glances over her shoulder, clutching her basket a little tighter as the shadows deepen between the trees. Red glanced over her shoulder, the deepening shadows between the trees urging her to clutch her basket a little tighter. As she walked beside her companion, their footsteps sending up a rhythmic crunch of twigs, she couldn’t help but recall her grandmother’s words—how she always insisted that Red stay on the path. The memory lingered in her mind, a gentle warning woven through the hush of the forest: the woods remembered every footstep, but not always kindly. Red’s curiosity pressed her forward, but caution remained close at hand, her grandmother’s wisdom echoing in her thoughts as the two ventured deeper beneath the shifting canopy. Luc (The Woodsman)Luc scans the undergrowth with a practiced eye, his axe resting comfortably at his side as he guides Red around a gnarled root protruding from the mossy earth. Luc moved with quiet assurance, his eyes sweeping the tangled undergrowth for any sign of trouble, the weight of his axe familiar at his side. He reached out, steadying Red with a gentle hand as he guided her around a twisted root that jutted from the mossy earth, his touch careful despite

the roughness of his palm. The woods pressed in close, shadows pooling between ancient trunks, and Luc's voice came low, threaded with a respect born from years spent beneath these boughs. "Your grandmother's a wise woman," he said, gaze lingering on the shifting gloom ahead. "These trees have long memories and longer shadows; sometimes it's not just the wolves you need to watch for." The words hung in the air, as if the forest itself was listening, and Luc's glance toward Red was protective, warning and reassurance all at once as they continued along the narrow path. Red (Little Red Riding Hood) Red glances sideways at Luc, clutching her basket a little tighter as a breeze stirs the branches overhead. Red glanced sideways at Luc, her fingers tightening imperceptibly around the handle of her basket as a restless breeze stirred the branches above. The woods ahead seemed to hush, the shadows pooling and shifting with every step they took. She pressed her lips together for a moment, then let her gaze linger on the dappling patterns of light and dark that danced across the path. Sometimes, she wondered if the shadows themselves were listening—waiting, patient, for secrets to slip between the leaves. The thought hovered unspoken between them, threaded through the gentle crunch of twigs beneath their boots, as if the forest itself was holding its breath. Luc (The Woodsman) Luc glances sideways at Red, lowering his voice, as a gust stirs the branches overhead and a distant crack echoes through the undergrowth. Luc glanced sideways at Red just as a sharp gust stirred the branches overhead, scattering brittle leaves across their path. The rhythmic crunch of twigs under their boots seemed to echo the tension in the air. In the hush that followed a distant crack from the undergrowth, Luc lowered his voice, a protective edge threading through his words. He murmured, almost as if speaking to the woods themselves, that if anyone was listening, it was best not to give them anything worth repeating. Silence, he continued, could be a shield—if one knew how to wear it. His gaze lingered on Red, gentle behind its gruffness, as if urging her to trust in the quiet between them. Red (Little Red Riding Hood) Red glances sideways at Luc, brushing a stray curl behind her ear as she sidesteps a crooked root, her grip tightening on the basket swinging at her side. Red glanced sideways at Luc, brushing a stray curl behind her ear as she sidestepped a crooked root, her grip tightening on the basket swinging at her side. The woods pressed in around them, branches arching overhead, and with every step the hush between them grew heavier. The only sound was the steady crunch of twigs beneath their boots—except for her own heart, which pounded so fiercely she was certain even the trees could hear it. Silence, she realized, was harder than it sounded, especially when your heart refused to quiet, thumping loud enough for every branch to take notice. Luc (The Woodsman) Luc glances sideways at Red, his axe resting lightly on his shoulder, the dappled light flickering across his weathered face as they tread deeper into the gloom. Luc glanced sideways at Red, his axe balanced lightly on his shoulder as the dappled light flickered across the lines of his weathered face. With every step, the forest seemed to swallow them a little more, the gloom thickening between the trunks. Twigs crunched beneath their boots, the rhythm steady and grounding. Luc's voice broke the hush, low and thoughtful, as if sharing something he'd learned from years among these shadows: the forest had a way of echoing what lay within—a man's fear, his hope, even the secrets he carried. Yet, beneath his quiet words was a gentle reassurance. There was comfort, he told her, in knowing you weren't walking it alone. Red (Little Red Riding Hood) Red tightens her grip on the basket, glancing sidelong at Luc, her steps unconsciously matching his as the shadows deepen around them. Red tightened her grip on the basket, her fingers curling around the worn handle as she stole a sidelong glance at Luc. Their footsteps fell in unison, the rhythmic crunch of twigs beneath their boots mingling with the hush of deepening shadows around them. She let out a slow breath, the weight of the woods pressing in on her shoulders, and then, almost as if confiding a secret to the dusk, admitted, "Maybe that's why I agreed to let you walk with me—it's easier to be brave when someone else is listening too." Luc reassures her, promising to

protect her and share knowledge about the woods' flora.

Red ultimately agrees, suggesting she trusts him as long as he walks with her and points out wildflowers.

As they proceed, their dialogue deepens, reflecting on the forest's shifting mood and the wisdom of Red's grandmother.

The atmosphere grows more introspective, with both characters discussing the nature of the forest, the meaning of silence, and the comfort of companionship.

Red admits her courage is bolstered by Luc's presence, showing a growing trust and rapport between them as they walk into the narrowing, shadowed path.

Their steps slow as the trees close in, shadows layering the path in uncertainty. Just as Red finds herself emboldened by Luc's company, a sudden rustling from the undergrowth interrupts their exchange. The forest, once merely a backdrop to their conversation, now seems to press in with a new urgency. A figure emerges between the trunks, axe glinting at his side—a presence that neither Red nor Luc can ignore, shifting the course of their journey in an instant.

Chapter 6: The Woodsman Intervenes

Red steps onto the mossy path, her boots squelching in the soft ground, a basket clutched tight in her hand.

The Wolf, unusually tense, circles her, his amber eyes scanning the shadows—not for prey, but for signs of a deeper threat.

He warns of change on the wind, his instincts alerting him to more than just the familiar dance with Red.

Luc bursts from the thicket, axe in hand, but instead of immediately threatening the Wolf, he demands clarity and truth, placing himself as both protector and interrogator.

Red, refusing to be relegated to a passive role, asserts her agency, demanding that all voices be heard and truths revealed.

The conversation grows tense and probing, with each character exposing suspicion and deeper motivations: Red seeks answers, not rescue;

Luc admits to secrets buried in the forest;

the Wolf reveals his presence at Grandmother's house was a warning, not an attack.

As accusations and questions fly, a new tension emerges: the realization that something else, a darker presence or secret, stalks them all.

The fragile peace becomes an uneasy alliance as the trio acknowledges a greater threat lurking in the woods, shifting their focus from mutual suspicion to confronting the unknown together.

The Wolf narrows his eyes, hackles bristling, and shifts his weight from paw to paw, muscles taut as bowstrings. Wolf paused at the edge of the clearing, his nose twitching as he lifted his

head to the restless wind. There was something out there—he could taste it, sharp and electric, lingering at the back of his throat. Not prey; not tonight. The forest was too still, too tense for anything as simple as a hunt. No, this was different. Trouble, perhaps. Or worse—change. A low, thoughtful grunt escaped him, the sound swallowed by the darkness. He knew that scent well: the scent of change always came before the world spun out of control, and tonight, it clung to the air like a warning. WolfThe Wolf lowers his head, ears swiveling as he pads quietly to the edge of the clearing, muscles coiled and eyes narrowed against the coming unknown. The Wolf lowered his head, ears swiveling as he padded quietly to the edge of the clearing. Every muscle was coiled, his eyes narrowed against the shadowy unknown that pressed at the tree line. He paused, nose twitching as the scents of earth and anticipation mingled on the air. Tension rippled through his body—a familiar thrill, but laced with something sharper tonight. Best keep my senses sharp, he reminded himself, a wry thought flickering behind his golden gaze. Change, after all, had teeth even sharper than his own. —————

Together, they stepped into the deepening shadows, united by uncertainty but no longer alone, as the forest held its breath for what would come next.