

# Gothic Fairytales Little Red-Cap

Once upon a time, there was a dear little girl who was loved by everyone who looked at her. Most of all, she was loved by her grandmother, who would have given anything in the world to the child. Once, she gave the little girl a special little cap of red velvet, which suited her so well that she would never wear anything else; from that day on, she was called 'Little Red-Cap.'

One day, her mother said to her: "Come, Little Red-Cap, here is a piece of cake and a bottle of wine; take them to your grandmother, she is ill and weak, and they will do her good. Set out before it gets dark, and when you are going, walk nicely and quietly and do not run off the path, or you may fall and break the bottle, and then your grandmother will get nothing; and when you go into her room, don't forget to say, 'Good morning', and don't peep into every corner before you do it. Young women should not be so curious as you."

"I will take great care," said Little Red-Cap to her mother, putting her hand to her heart to signify the pledge.

The grandmother lived far into the dark woods, half a league from the village and isolated from all else. Just as Little Red-Cap entered the wood, a wolf met her. Red-Cap did not know what a wicked creature he was, and so was not at as wary of him as she should have been.

"Good day, Little Red-Cap," said he.

"Thank you kindly, wolf."

"Whither away so early, Little Red-Cap?"

"To my grandmother's."

"What have you got in your apron?"

"Cake and wine; yesterday was baking-day, so poor sick grandmother is to have something good, to make her stronger."

"Where does your grandmother live, Little Red-Cap?"

"A good quarter of a league farther on in the wood; her house stands under the shadow of the three large oak trees," replied Little Red-Cap.

The wolf thought to himself: "What a tender young creature! What a nice plump mouthful—she will be better to eat than the old woman. I must act craftily, so as to catch both." So, he walked for a short time by the side of Little Red-Cap, and then he said:

"See, Little Red-Cap, how pretty the flowers are about here—why do you not look round? I believe, too, that you do not hear how sweetly the little birds are singing; you walk gravely along as if you were going to school, while everything else out here in the wood is merry."



Little Red-Cap raised her eyes, and when she saw the beams of the setting sun dancing here and there through the trees, and pretty flowers growing everywhere, she thought: "Suppose I take grandmother a fresh nosegay; that would please her too. The darkness is only creeping slowly upon us, I shall still get there in good time"; and so, she strayed from the safety of the path to look for flowers. And whenever she had picked one, she fancied that she saw a still prettier one farther on, and ran after it, and so got deeper and deeper into the wood.

Meanwhile the wolf scurried straight to the grandmother's house and knocked at the door.

"Who is there?"

"Little Red-Cap," replied the wolf. "She is bringing cake and wine; open the door."

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

The wolf lifted the latch, the door sprang open and, without saying a word, he went straight to the grandmother's bed, and devoured her whole. Then, he put on her blood-stained clothes, dressed himself in her nightcap, laid himself in bed and drew the curtains to envelope himself in darkness.

Little Red-Cap, however, had been running about picking flowers, and when she had gathered so many that she could carry no more, she remembered her grandmother, and set out on the way to her before the gloom of the evening descended further.

She was surprised to find the cottage door standing open, and when she went into the room, she had such a strange feeling that she said to herself: "Oh dear, how uneasy I feel today, and at other times I like being with grandmother so much." She called out "Good morning," but received no answer; she went to the bed and drew back the curtains. There lay her grandmother with her cap pulled far over her face, and looking very strange. Little Red-Cap could not escape the sense of the peculiar, but nor could she place her finger on what was amiss.

"Oh! grandmother," she said, "what big ears you have!"

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

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

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

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

"The better to hug you with."

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

"The better to eat you with!"

And scarcely had the wolf howled this, than with one bound he was out of bed and swallowed up Red-Cap.

When the wolf had appeased his appetite, he lay down again in the bed, fell asleep and began to snore very loudly. The huntsman was just passing the house, and thought to himself: "How the old woman

is snoring! I must just see if she wants anything.” So he went into the room and, when he came to the bed, he saw that the wolf was lying in it. “Do I find you here, you old sinner?” said he. “I have long sought you!” Then, just as he was going to fire at the wolf, it occurred to him that the wolf might have devoured the grandmother, and that she might still be saved. So, he did not fire, but took a pair of scissors and began to slice open the stomach of the sleeping wolf. When he had made two snips, the huntsman saw the little Red-Cap shining. He made two snips more, and the little girl sprang out, crying: “Ah, how frightened I have been! How dark it was inside the wolf!”



After that, the aged grandmother also came out alive, but was scarcely able to breathe. Red-Cap, however, quickly fetched great stones with which they filled the wolf’s belly. When he awoke, the wolf wanted to run away, but the stones were so heavy that he collapsed at once, and fell dead.

Then, all three were delighted. The huntsman drew off the wolf’s skin and went home with it; the grandmother ate the cake and drank the wine which Red-Cap had brought, and revived. Red-Cap thought to herself: “As long as I live, I will never by myself leave the path, to run into the wood, when my mother has forbidden me to do so.”