

Little Red Riding Hood by Charles Perrault

Once upon a time there lived in a certain village a little country girl, the prettiest creature who was ever seen. Her mother was excessively fond of her; and her grandmother doted on her still more. This good woman had a little red riding hood made for her. It suited the girl so extremely well that everybody called her Little Red Riding Hood.

One day her mother, having made some cakes, said to her, "Go, my dear, and see how your grandmother is doing, for I hear she has been very ill. Take her a cake, and this little pot of butter."

Little Red Riding Hood set out immediately to go to her grandmother, who lived in another village.

As she was going through the wood, she met with a wolf, who had a very great mind to eat her up, but he dared not, because of some woodcutters working nearby in the forest. He asked her where she was going. The poor child, who did not know that it was dangerous to stay and talk to a wolf, said to him, "I am going to see my grandmother and carry her a cake and a little pot of butter from my mother."

"Does she live far off?" said the wolf

"Oh I say," answered Little Red Riding Hood; "it is beyond that mill you see there, at the first house in the village."

"Well," said the wolf, "and I'll go and see her too. I'll go this way and go you that, and we shall see who will be there first."

The wolf ran as fast as he could, taking the shortest path, and the little girl took a roundabout way, entertaining herself by gathering nuts, running after butterflies, and gathering bouquets of little flowers. It was not long before the wolf arrived at the old woman's house. He knocked at the door: tap, tap.

"Who's there?"

"Your grandchild, Little Red Riding Hood," replied the wolf, counterfeiting her voice; "who has brought you a cake and a little pot of butter sent you by mother."

The good grandmother, who was in bed, because she was somewhat ill, cried out, "Pull the bobbin, and the latch will go up."

The wolf pulled the bobbin, and the door opened, and then he immediately fell upon the good woman and ate her up in a moment, for it been more than three days since he had eaten. He then shut the door and got into the grandmother's bed, expecting Little Red Riding Hood, who came some time afterwards and knocked at the door: tap, tap.

"Who's there?"

Little Red Riding Hood, hearing the big voice of the wolf, was at first afraid; but believing her grandmother had a cold and was hoarse, answered, "It is your grandchild Little Red Riding Hood, who has brought you a cake and a little pot of butter mother sends you."

The wolf cried out to her, softening his voice as much as he could, "Pull the bobbin, and the latch will go up."

Little Red Riding Hood pulled the bobbin, and the door opened.

The wolf, seeing her come in, said to her, hiding himself under the bedclothes, "Put the cake and the little pot of butter upon the stool, and come get into bed with me."

Little Red Riding Hood took off her clothes and got into bed. She was greatly amazed to see how her grandmother looked in her nightclothes, and said to her, "Grandmother, what big arms you have!"

"All the better to hug you with, my dear."

"Grandmother, what big legs you have!"

"All the better to run with, my child."

"Grandmother, what big ears you have!"

"All the better to hear with, my child."

"Grandmother, what big eyes you have!"

"All the better to see with, my child."

"Grandmother, what big teeth you have got!"

"All the better to eat you up with."

And, saying these words, this wicked wolf fell upon Little Red Riding Hood, and ate her all up.

Moral: Children, especially attractive, well bred young ladies, should never talk to strangers, for if they should do so, they may well provide dinner for a wolf. I say "wolf," but there are various kinds of wolves. There are also those who are charming, quiet, polite, unassuming, complacent, and sweet, who pursue young women at home and in the streets. And unfortunately, it is these gentle wolves who are the most dangerous ones of all.

Little Red Cap by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm

Once upon a time there was a sweet little girl. Everyone who saw her liked her, but most of all her grandmother, who did not know what to give the child next. Once she gave her a little cap made of red velvet. Because it suited her so well, and she wanted to wear it all the time, she came to be known as 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 sick and weak, and they will do her well. Mind your manners and give her my greetings. Behave yourself on the way, and do not leave the path, or you might fall down and break the glass, and then there will be nothing for your sick grandmother."

Little Red Cap promised to obey her mother. The grandmother lived out in the woods, a half hour from the village. When Little Red Cap entered the woods a wolf came up to her. She did not know what a wicked animal he was, and was not afraid of him.

"Good day to you, Little Red Cap."

"Thank you, wolf."

"Where are you going so early, Little Red Cap?"

"To grandmother's."

"And what are you carrying under your apron?"

"Grandmother is sick and weak, and I am taking her some cake and wine. We baked yesterday, and they should give her strength."

"Little Red Cap, just where does your grandmother live?"

"Her house is a good quarter hour from here in the woods, under the three large oak trees. There's a hedge of hazel bushes there. You must know the place," said Little Red Cap.

The wolf thought to himself, "Now there is a tasty bite for me. Just how are you going to catch her?" Then he said, "Listen, Little Red Cap, haven't you seen the beautiful flowers that are

blossoming in the woods? Why don't you go and take a look? And I don't believe you can hear how beautifully the birds are singing. You are walking along as though you were on your way to school in the village. It is very beautiful in the woods."

Little Red Cap opened her eyes and saw the sunlight breaking through the trees and how the ground was covered with beautiful flowers. She thought, "If I take a bouquet to grandmother, she will be very pleased. Anyway, it is still early, and I'll be home on time." And she ran off into the woods looking for flowers. Each time she picked one she thought that she could see an even more beautiful one a little way off, and she ran after it, going further and further into the woods. But the wolf ran straight to the grandmother's house and knocked on the door.

"Who's there?"

"Little Red Cap. I'm bringing you some cake and wine. Open the door for me."

"Just press the latch," called out the grandmother. "I'm too weak to get up."

The wolf pressed the latch, and the door opened. He stepped inside, went straight to the grandmother's bed, and ate her up. Then he took her clothes, put them on, and put her cap on his head. He got into her bed and pulled the curtains shut.

Little Red Cap had run after flowers, and did not continue on her way to grandmother's until she had gathered all that she could carry. When she arrived, she found, to her surprise, that the door was open. She walked into the parlor, and everything looked so strange that she thought, "Oh, my God, why am I so afraid? I usually like it at grandmother's." Then she went to the bed and pulled back the curtains. Grandmother was lying there with her cap pulled down over her face and looking very strange.

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

"All the better to hear you with."

"Oh, grandmother, what big eyes you have!"

"All the better to see you with."

"Oh, grandmother, what big hands you have!"

"All the better to grab you with!"

"Oh, grandmother, what a horribly big mouth you have!"

"All the better to eat you with!" And with that he jumped out of bed, jumped on top of poor Little Red Cap, and ate her up. As soon as the wolf had finished this tasty bite, he climbed back into bed, fell asleep, and began to snore very loudly.

A huntsman was just passing by. He thought it strange that the old woman was snoring so loudly, so he decided to take a look. He stepped inside, and in the bed there lay the wolf that he had been hunting for such a long time. "He has eaten the grandmother, but perhaps she still can be saved. I won't shoot him," thought the huntsman. So he took a pair of scissors and cut open his belly.

He had cut only a few strokes when he saw the red cap shining through. He cut a little more, and the girl jumped out and cried, "Oh, I was so frightened! It was so dark inside the wolf's body!"

And then the grandmother came out alive as well. Then Little Red Cap fetched some large heavy stones. They filled the wolf's body with them, and when he woke up and tried to run away, the stones were so heavy that he fell down dead.

The three of them were happy. The huntsman took the wolf's pelt. The grandmother ate the cake and drank the wine that Little Red Cap had brought. And Little Red Cap thought to herself, "As long as I live, I will never leave the path and run off into the woods by myself if mother tells me not to."

They also tell how Little Red Cap was taking some baked things to her grandmother another time, when another wolf spoke to her and wanted her to leave the path. But Little Red Cap took care and went straight to grandmother's. She told her that she had seen the wolf, and that he had wished her a good day, but had stared at her in a wicked manner. "If we hadn't been on a public road, he would have eaten me up," she said.

"Come," said the grandmother. "Let's lock the door, so he can't get in."

Soon afterward the wolf knocked on the door and called out, "Open up, grandmother. It's Little Red Cap, and I'm bringing you some baked things."

They remained silent, and did not open the door. The wicked one walked around the house several times, and finally jumped onto the roof. He wanted to wait until Little Red Cap went home that evening, then follow her and eat her up in the darkness. But the grandmother saw what he was up to. There was a large stone trough in front of the house.

"Fetch a bucket, Little Red Cap," she said. "Yesterday I cooked some sausage. Carry the water that I boiled them with to the trough." Little Red Cap carried water until the large, large trough was clear full. The smell of sausage arose into the wolf's nose. He sniffed and looked down, stretching his neck so long that he could no longer hold himself, and he began to slide. He slid off the roof, fell into the trough, and drowned. And Little Red Cap returned home happily and safely.

Donkey Skin by Charles Perrault

Once upon a time there was a king who was the most powerful ruler in the whole world. Kind and just in peace and terrifying in war, his enemies feared him while his subjects were happy and content. His wife and faithful companion was both charming and beautiful. From their union a daughter had been born.

Their large and magnificent palace was filled with courtiers, and their stables boasted steeds large and small, of every description. But what surprised everyone on entering these stables was that the place of honor was held by a donkey with two big ears. However, it was quite worthy of this position, for every morning, instead of dung, it dropped a great load of gold coins upon the litter.

Now heaven, which seems to mingle good with evil, suddenly permitted a bitter illness to attack the queen. Help was sought on all sides, but neither the learned physicians nor the charlatans were able to arrest the fever which increased daily. Finally, her last hour having come, the queen said to her husband: "Promise me that if, when I am gone, you find a woman wiser and more beautiful than I, you will marry her and so provide an heir for throne."

Confident that it would be impossible to find such a woman, the queen thus believed that her husband would never remarry. The king accepted his wife's conditions, and shortly thereafter she died in his arms.

For a time the king was inconsolable in his grief, both day and night. Some months later, however, on the urging of his courtiers, he agreed to marry again, but this was not an easy matter, for he had to keep his promise to his wife and search as he might, he could not find a new wife with all the attractions he sought. Only his daughter had a charm and beauty which even the queen had not possessed.

Thus only by marrying his daughter could he satisfy the promise he had made to his dying wife, and so he forthwith proposed marriage to her. This frightened and saddened the princess, and she tried to show her father the mistake he was making. Deeply troubled at this turn of events, she sought out her fairy godmother who lived in a grotto of coral and pearls.

"I know why you have come here," her godmother said. "In your heart there is a great sadness. But I am here to help you and nothing can harm you if you follow my advice. You must not

disobey your father, but first tell him that you must have a dress which has the color of the sky. Certainly he will never be able to meet that request."

And so the young princess went all trembling to her father. But he, the moment he heard her request, summoned his best tailors and ordered them, without delay, to make a dress the color of the sky, or they could be assured he would hang them all.

The following day the dress was shown to the princess. It was the most beautiful blue of heaven. Filled now with both happiness and fear, she did not know what to do, but her godmother again told her, "Ask for a dress the color of the moon. Surely your father will not be able to give you this."

No sooner had the princess made the request than the king summoned his embroiderers and ordered that a dress the color of the moon be completed by the fourth day. On that very day it was ready and the princess was again delighted with its beauty.

But still her godmother urged her once again to make a request of the king, this time for a dress as bright and shining as the sun. This time the king summoned a wealthy jeweler and ordered him to make a cloth of gold and diamonds, warning him that if he failed he would die. Within a week the jeweler had finished the dress, so beautiful and radiant that it dazzled the eyes of everyone who saw it.

The princess did not know how to thank the king, but once again her godmother whispered in her ear. "Ask him for the skin of the donkey in the royal stable. The king will not consider your request seriously. You will not receive it, or I am badly mistaken." But she did not understand how extraordinary was the king's desire to please his daughter. Almost immediately the donkey's skin was brought to the princess.

Once again she was frightened and once again her godmother came to her assistance. "Pretend," she said, "to give in to the king. Promise him anything he wishes, but, at the same time, prepare to escape to some far country.

"Here," she continued, "is a chest in which we will put your clothes, your mirror, the things for your toilet, your diamonds and other jewels. I will give you my magic wand. Whenever you have it in your hand, the chest will follow you everywhere, always hidden underground. Whenever you wish to open the chest, as soon as you touch the wand to the ground, the chest will appear. "To conceal you, the donkey's skin will be an admirable disguise, for when you are inside it, no one will believe that anyone so beautiful could be hidden in anything so frightful."

Early in the morning the princess disappeared as she was advised. They searched everywhere for her, in houses, along the roads, wherever she might have been, but in vain. No one could imagine what had become of her.

The princess, meanwhile, was continuing her flight. To everyone she met, she extended her hands, begging them to find her some place where she might find work. But she looked so unattractive and indeed so repulsive in her Donkey Skin disguise that no one would have anything to do with such a creature.

Farther and still farther she journeyed until finally she came to a farm where they needed a poor wretch to wash the dishcloths and clean out the pig troughs. They also made her work in a corner of the kitchen where she was exposed to the low jokes and ridicule of all the other servants.

On Sundays she had a little rest for, having completed her morning tasks, she went to her room and closed the door and bathed. Then she opened the chest, took out her toilet jars and set them up, with the mirror, before her. Having made herself beautiful once more, she tried on her moon dress, then that one which shone like the sun and, finally, the lovely blue dress. Her only regret was that she did not have room enough to display their trains. She was happy, however, in seeing herself young again, and this pleasure carried her along from one Sunday to the next.

On this great farm where she worked there was an aviary belonging to a powerful king. All sorts of unusual birds with strange habits were kept there. The king's son often stopped at this farm on his return from the hunt in order to rest and enjoy a cool drink with his courtiers. From a distance Donkey Skin gazed on him with tenderness and remembered that beneath her dirt and rags she still had the heart of a princess. What a grand manner he has, she thought. How gracious he is! How happy must she be to whom his heart is pledged! If he should give me a dress of only the simplest sort, I would feel more splendid wearing it than any of these which I have.

One day the young prince, seeking adventure from court yard to court yard, came to the obscure hallway where Donkey Skin had her humble room. By chance he put his eye to the key hole. It was a feast-day and Donkey Skin had put on her dress of gold and diamonds which shone as brightly as the sun. The prince was breathless at her beauty, her youthfulness, and her modesty. Three times he was on the point of entering her room, but each time refrained.

On his return to his father's palace, the prince became very thoughtful, sighing day and night and refusing to attend any of the balls and carnivals. He lost his appetite and finally sank into sad and deadly melancholy. He asked who this beautiful maiden was that lived in such squalor and was told that it was Donkey Skin, the ugliest animal one could find, except the wolf, and a certain cure for love. This he would not believe, and he refused to forget what he had seen. His mother, the queen, begged him to tell her what was wrong. Instead, he moaned, wept and sighed. He would say nothing, except that he wanted Donkey Skin to make him a cake with her own hands.

"O heavens," they told her, "this Donkey Skin is only a poor, drab servant."

"It makes no difference," replied the queen. "We must do as he says. It is the only way to save him."

So Donkey Skin took some flour which she had ground especially fine, and some salt, some butter and some fresh eggs and shut herself alone in her room to make the cake. But first she washed her face and hands and put on a silver smock in honor of the task she had undertaken. Now the story goes that, working perhaps a little too hastily, there fell from Donkey Skin's finger into the batter a ring of great value. Some who know the outcome of this story think that she may have dropped the ring on purpose, and they are probably right, for when the prince stopped at her door and looked through the key hole, she must have known it. And she was sure that the ring would be received most joyfully by her lover.

The prince found the cake so good that in his ravishing hunger, he almost swallowed the ring! When he saw the beautiful emerald and the band of gold that traced the shape of Donkey Skin's finger, his heart was filled with an indescribable joy. At once he put the ring under his pillow, but his illness increased daily until finally the doctors, seeing him grow worse, gravely concluded that he was sick with love.

Marriage, whatever may be said against it, is an excellent remedy for love sickness. And so it was decided that the prince was to marry.

"But I insist," he said, "that I will wed only the person whom this ring fits." This unusual demand surprised the king and queen very much, but the prince was so ill that they did not dare object. A search began for whoever might be able to fit the ring on her finger, no matter what the station in life. It was rumored throughout the land that in order to win the prince one must have a very slender finger. Every charlatan had his secret method of making the finger slim. One suggested scraping it as though it was a turnip. Another recommended cutting away a small piece. Still another, with a certain liquid, planned to decrease the size by removing the skin.

At last the trials began with the princesses, the marquesses and the duchesses, but their fingers, although delicate, were too big for the ring. Then the countesses, the baronesses and all the nobility presented their hands, but all in vain. Next came the working girls, who often have slender and beautiful fingers, but the ring would not fit them, either.

Finally it was necessary to turn to the servants, the kitchen help, the slaveys and the poultry keepers, with their red and dirty hands. Putting the tiny ring on their clumsy fingers was like trying to thread a big rope through the eye of a needle.

At last the trials were finished. There remained only Donkey Skin in her far corner of the farm kitchen. Who could dream that she ever would be queen?

"And why not?" asked the prince. "Ask her to come here." At that, some started to laugh; others cried out against bringing that frightful creature into the room. But when she drew out from under the donkey skin a little hand as white as ivory and the ring was placed on her finger and fitted perfectly, everyone was astounded.

They prepared to take her to the king at once, but she asked that before she appeared before her lord and master, she be permitted to change her clothes. To tell the truth, there was some smiling at this request, but when she arrived at the palace in her beautiful dress, the richness of which had never been equaled, with her blonde hair all alight with diamonds and her blue eyes sweet and appealing and even her waist so slender that two hands could have encircled it, then even the gracious ladies of the court seemed, by comparison, to have lost all their charms. In all this happiness and excitement, the king did not fail to notice the charms of his prospective daughter-in-law, and the queen was completely delighted with her. The prince himself found his happiness almost more than he could bear. Preparations for the wedding were begun at once, and the kings of all the surrounding countries were invited. Some came from the East, mounted on huge elephants. Others were so fierce looking that they frightened the little children. From all the corners of the world they came and descended on the court in great numbers.

But neither the prince nor the many visiting kings appeared in such splendor as the bride's father, who now recognized his daughter and begged her forgiveness.

"How kind heaven is," he said, "to let me see you again, my dear daughter." Weeping with joy, he embraced her tenderly. His happiness was shared by all, and the future husband was delighted to find that his father-in-law was such a powerful king. At that moment the fairy godmother arrived, too, and told the whole story of what had happened, and what she had to tell added the final triumph for Donkey Skin.

It is not hard to see that the moral of this tale is that it is better to undergo the greatest hardships rather than to fail in one's duty, that virtue may sometimes seem ill-fated but will always triumph in the end.

The story of Donkey Skin may be hard to believe, but so long as there are children, mothers, and grandmothers in this world, it will be remembered by all.