Little Red and the Wolf Lord
by AlanSchezar

Summary

A re-imagining of the classic tale with a very different sort of outcome...

Once upon a time there lived a lovely, well-bred young lady. She was so charming and kindhearted that she was adored by all who knew her, none more so than her dear grandmother. Once, her grandmother wove for her a vibrant red cloak hemmed in gold. The cloak suited her so well that she would never wear anything else, so she came to be known as Little Red Riding Hood.

One day, her mother said, "Come, Little Red Riding Hood, here is a cake and a bottle of fine wine for your grandmother. She is ill and weak, and these will do her good. Set out before it gets too hot, and walk properly as you go; do not stray from the path or you may fall and break the bottle, and then dear grandmother will get nothing. You are nearly a woman now, so you must mind your manners and not poke about grandmother's house before you greet her."

"I will do just as you ask, mother," said Little Red Riding Hood, and she set out for grandmother's house.

Grandmother lived far into the woods, a league from the village. Just as Little Red Riding Hood entered the woods, she was met by a tall figure. He wore a long black cloak with a crimson lining, a fine tailcoat and vest, a very dapper cravat with a ruby pin, white linen gloves, black trousers, shiny brown leather knee-high boots and a large, stylish black hat with a white plume. His face was covered by a whimsical mask, and at his belt there hung a shining saber in a silver scabbard. He looked as though he might be going to a very fancy costume ball. Little Red Riding Hood thought him a very dashing figure. What Little Red Riding Hood did not know was that this gentleman was none other than the wicked wolf the villagers often talked about. He had donned his mask in order to capture and devour unsuspecting travelers.

He bowed graciously to her, tipping the brim of his broad traveler's hat, "Good day, Little Red
"Thank you kindly, sir!" she said, remembering her manners, "Pray tell me your name?"

"I am the Lord of the Woods, my dear. And whither away so early, Little Red Riding Hood?"

"To my grandmother's, milord" replied Little Red Riding Hood shyly, never having met a nobleman before.

The crafty wolf continued, "and what have you under your apron?"

"A cake and some wine for grandmother; she's fallen ill, and I've brought her something good to make her stronger."

"Pray tell, where does your grandmother live?"

"Half a league from here, under the three oaks; you must surely know her house by the hazel hedges around it, milord."

Now the cunning wolf thought to himself, "What a lovely and tender young woman she is; she'll be even tastier to eat than the old crone, but I must act craftily if I'm to catch them both!"

Like a proper gentleman, the sly wolf extended his elbow and took Little Red Riding Hood's arm; when he saw her dainty hand slide around his sleeve, he couldn't help but think how lovely and delicate her hands were. Then he thought what an odd thought it was, and tried not to think of it anymore.

Thus he walked along beside her for a while. As they walked, the wolf couldn't help but notice the lovely golden strands of her long hair that wisped from under her hood, and he couldn't help but catch a glimpse of the softness of her lips in the morning sunlight. He tried not to notice any more than that. After a while he said: "See Little Red Riding Hood, how pretty are all the flowers around here – why don't you look around? I believe you do not hear how sweetly the birds are singing today; you walk along so gravely, looking straight ahead, while all the wood is merry this morning!"

Little Red Riding Hood raised her eyes and opened them wide and saw the sunbeams dancing here and there through the trees, and the pretty flowers growing everywhere. She thought: "Suppose I brought a fresh bouquet to grandmother! That would please her very much, and it is still so early, I will arrive home in plenty of time."

When the wolf saw how big and deep and blue her eyes were, he thought they must be the most beautiful eyes he had ever seen, and for a moment he almost forgot his wicked plan. Then Little Red Riding Hood ran off the path and began to pick the wild flowers. When she had picked one, she saw a still prettier one further on, and she strayed deeper and deeper into the woods.

The wolf did not waste a moment; he dashed as fast as he could to grandma's house and rapped at the door.

"Who is it?" said grandmother, her voice very soft and weak.

"Why, it's Little Red Riding Hood," said the wolf, trying his best to imitate her soft, melodious voice, "I've brought you cake and wine to make you well."

"Just lift the latch, dear," said grandmother, "I'm too weak to get up."

So the wolf unlatched the door and without a word he dashed to her bed and gobbled up
grandmother in one big gulp. Now the wolf had a mind to put on some of grandmother's clothes and climb into her bed, shut the curtains and lie in wait to devour Little Red Riding Hood when she arrived, but as he was about to go to grandmother's closet, he noticed a shiny golden locket laying on grandmother's pillow that had fallen when he ate her.

He stooped down and picked it up; opening it he saw a magnificently painted portrait of Little Red Riding Hood. The artist's masterful brush had perfectly captured her flowing golden hair, her deep blue eyes, and her soft, fair skin. The wolf gazed at this picture for a long time, and as he gazed he felt a strange feeling deep inside his hard, cold heart; the feeling was so strange and unfamiliar that he thought he had never felt it before. He shut the locket in annoyance and shook his head, "Why should I wait for my delectable morsel?" he said angrily, "I shall go find her right now and eat her straight away!" So he dashed from the house, shoving the locket into the pocket of his vest.

Meanwhile, Little Red Riding Hood had wandered deep into the forest and had gathered so many flowers that she could hardly carry any more. The wolf crept up silently and hid himself in some bushes not far from her. As he approached, he could hear her singing sweetly to herself:

*Red is the rose in yonder garden grows,*

*Fair is the Lily of the Valley,*

*Clear is the water that flows from the point*

*And my love is fairer than any…*

Her song was so sweet, her voice so pure and melodious that it melted the wolf's sin stained heart, and he was rooted to the spot as he watched her sing and pluck flowers. As he watched her, she suddenly noticed a single white rose in full bloom. "Ah!" said she, "here is a gift befitting the Lord of the Woods; I would like to thank him for helping me to see the beauty of this wonderful forest. I shall give it to him as soon as I see him again. I do hope it pleases him."

At this, the wolf's heart could bear no more. He was seized with a feeling unlike any other he had ever felt, and all at once he knew: he had fallen in love with Little Red Riding Hood. No sooner did he realize his deep love for her than terrible guilt and grief came over him; he had eaten dear Little Red Riding Hood's grandmother. Unable to control himself any longer, he leapt from the bushes and stood before Little Red Riding Hood, who greeted him cheerfully, "Hello, milord!" she said with a polite curtsey.

"Do you wish to see what lies beneath this mask?" asked the wolf solemnly.

"Oh yes, milord!" replied Little Red Riding Hood, eagerly wishing to see the face of the charming lord, thinking he must be very handsome.

The wolf silently removed his broad-brimmed hat with its white plume and hung it on a nearby branch.

"Oh my, what big ears you have, mi'lord!"

"All the better to hear your sweet, sweet voice, my dear…"

The wolf removed his white linen gloves, revealing his terrible claws.

"Oh! What big hands you have, milord!"

"All the better to embrace you, my dear…"
The wolf raised his paw to his mask, and Little Red Riding Hood stepped a little closer, peering through the eye holes to see for the first time his pale golden eyes, which she thought rather lovely, "Oh my, what big eyes you have..." she said softly, wondering what sort of face could possess such piercing eyes as these.

"All the better to behold your beauty, my dear..." said the wolf, which made Little Red Riding Hood blush just a little.

The wolf drew back his mask and tossed it aside. Little Red Riding Hood gasped as she saw the wolf standing before her. She knew that she should run, but instead she stepped a little closer, "...what a big nose you have, milord Wolf..."

"The better to draw in your fragrant scent, my dear..." he said, a faint, longing sigh in his voice.

She stepped closer still, gazing up at him, "And what a big mouth you have, Wolf," she said timidly.

The wolf's heart ached with love for her, and he softly replied, "The better to kiss you with, my dear Little Red Riding Hood." He gently took her delicate hand in his, and bowing he kissed it very tenderly. But as he drew back, Little Red Riding Hood felt a single tear land on her skin.

"Why do you cry, Wolf?"

The wolf's big heart, now softened by the powerful love he felt for Little Red Riding Hood, was pierced with grief, for he knew he had taken away the one whom his beloved adored most in the world. "I must confess," he said sadly, "that I am a wicked wolf, and I have done a terrible, evil thing to you, my dearest Little Red Riding Hood."

Little Red Riding Hood looked worried, "What do you mean?"

The wolf took grandmother's locket from his vest and placed it into Little Red Riding Hood's trembling hand. "When I met you on the forest path, I devised a wicked plot to devour you and your grandmother, but now I have fallen madly in love with you, and my heart is broken for the thing that I've done."

Little Red Riding Hood was seized with horror, and she fell to her knees, weeping and crying, "How could you!?" she screamed, "You evil, wicked wolf! How could you eat my dear, sweet grandmother!" Little Red Riding Hood wept bitterly, clutching grandmother's locket and sobbing. She knew that the evil wolf would probably eat her too, but her grief was far too great, and so she merely wept and sobbed.

The wolf's heart was torn to see his beloved suffer so, and he was deeply moved. He knew what he must do; "Very well," he began, "There is no other way." He drew his shining saber, the blade glinting in the sunbeams. Little Red Riding Hood looked on in fear, thinking he would surely cut off her head and devour her.

The wolf turned his saber toward himself, and grasping the blade with his other hand so tightly that his fingers bled, he cut open his own belly. Out came aged grandmother, alive but scarcely able to breathe. Little Red Riding Hood leapt for joy and hugged her grandmother in delight. The wolf fell backward in a swoon and lay near death, still holding his bloodied sword. But as Little Red Riding Hood looked at him, she saw a faint, happy smile come to his terrible lips.

"Though my soul is black with sin, and it is surely to Hell I must soon go, my heart is overflowing with joy to see you so happy, my dearest beloved," he said.

Little Red Riding Hood took his hand in both of hers, and looked deep into his golden eyes, and she
knew that his love was true; she took pity on him. "Is there nothing we can do to save him?" she asked her grandmother.

Now grandmother was not an ordinary old woman, but had been a powerful enchantress in her youth. She loved Little Red Riding Hood more than any other in the world, and so she took pity on her and said, "Very well, there is a way he can be saved. The red cloak I made for you is hemmed in a magical golden thread, and if I use it to sew up the belly of the wolf, he will live. But your pretty red cloak will be forever marred, and its magic will depart. Are you certain you want me to do this?"

"Oh yes, please!" cried Little Red Riding Hood, feeling the life draining away from her dear wolf, "Please save him!"

"If I sew you up, wolf, you must promise not to bite, for it will be quite painful," said grandmother to the wolf, still leery of him. The wolf nodded, "I give you my word as a gentleman," said he.

And so grandmother drew out the magical golden thread from Little Red Riding Hood's cloak, and took out a big golden needle from her bonnet, and sewed up the belly of the wolf, saving him from death. Little Red Riding Hood was so overjoyed that she leapt into the arms of the wolf and hugged him tightly, laying her head against his chest. She could hear his heart beating strongly, and she said, "Oh my, what a big heart you have, my dear Wolf."

"The better to love you with," said he, wrapping her up in his arms. After a moment, he looked into her eyes and said, "Dearest Little Red Riding Hood, will you marry me?"

"Yes, I will, milord Wolf!" she replied.

And so grandmother wove the remaining golden thread into two golden wedding rings, and fetched the old blind village parson from down the lane, who could not object to the union as he thought the wolf to be merely an ordinary gentleman like any other, and the cake that Little Red Riding Hood brought became their wedding cake, and the wine was for their wedding toast, and so they were married. Grandmother ate some of the cake and toasted the wedding with the wine and became strong and well again.

After they had been wed, Little Red Riding Hood asked her grandmother, "What was the magic that you wove into this cloak of mine?" Grandmother smiled and said, "Because I love you most of all in the whole world, I cast a spell on the golden thread I wove into the hem of your cloak that would draw your one true love to you at the right time and bind you together forever."

And so Little Red Riding Hood and the Wolf Lord of the Woods lived happily ever after, and together had many other adventures…but that is another story.

THE END.

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