



# *Just right*

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Animals, Retold Fairy Tales

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Time seemed to stand still for her in her parent's bedroom in this tight cottage in the middle of nowhere. It was far too small to share with two others anyway. She swore she'd seen her own reflection in the blood that dripped from her knife. However, this mirror did not cast a look of guilt, but instead one of triumph and victory, because this blood had been cut from a bear. The most detested creature in all the forest. She had had enough of them. They treated you with no sense of equality and saw you as nothing more than a child, they treated you unfairly and without justice and they asserted their power over you without any consideration. And that is why she felt no remorse when she clawed at the bears with her own knife, leaving them dead on her Mother and Father's bed.

A hundred black crows burst out of the tree tops; a hundred silhouettes against the midday sky. The absence of light created a whole new palette of browns and greens depressed without the sunlight; darkness was now the most abundant color in the forest. To eyes not local it was impossible to distinguish between day or night when under the endless canopy of wrestling tress. The only light that made it to the ground was that over the Locks residence: The only cottage within a 10 mile radius. And entering that radius was Goldie. She was returning home from her walk being careful to step over exposed roots that might attempt to keep her there as she walked out into the clearing and along the familiar path home. She noticed her homemade red dress was slightly torn at the hem but she couldn't recall exactly what happened. As she neared home, she disregarded it as an unfortunate encounter with the arm of a tree.

Approaching the door with a skip, in addition to her ripped attire, Goldie donned a gleaming smile. She began to whistle hoping her Mother would recognize the song, but when she noticed the door slightly ajar her enthusiasm quietened. Only when she touched the door handle did she realize the hand print of blood. She feared who this red grip belonged to as she took her hand away from the blood stained brass, leaving an

imprint of dark and patchy red on her palm.

The door creaked open to a desolate kitchen: the cupboards had their guts spilt all over the floor, the cupboard doors hanging on for life, the windows had been smashed, covering the floor with glass teeth. The cupboards had been raided and their contents thrown all over the place. Glass teeth lined the floor as a result of broken windows clearly smashed from the outside, perhaps an attempt to gain entry into the cottage Goldie thought. The only objects still intact were three bowls, all varying in size. Although the biggest two had been eaten out of, Goldie could tell by the untouched third bowl that these had once contained porridge. She adored coming home to a bowl of still warm porridge after a long walk, Mother knew this but always seemed to make it a little too hot or a little too cold. Why had Mother and Father eaten without her? And who had demolished their cottage as if it were a nest for a bird? Goldie held onto these questions as she walked into the main room.

If the main room of a house can be described as the heart of the home then what greeted Goldie was a heart attack. The smashed windows were punctured lungs letting in unwanted air from the outside; like fractured ribs every piece of furniture was split and cracked and like clogged arteries the sofa stood limp against the far wall with its stuffing seeping through the surface of the material. The room was fatally injured and only when the song of the birds outside ceased did Goldie notice the absolute silence of the house; the noiseless echo of tragedy. It was a similar scene to the one that welcomed her in the kitchen but this time only a small red chair in the corner of the room sat untouched. Surrounding the chair were two others but these seats had no pulse; they were barely recognizable as Mother and Father's beloved chairs. She knew from memory that the chairs were both a blue but to a stranger's eyes the color of the chairs would be almost impossible to identify behind all the red. She had never seen so much blood. It was clear that a struggle had taken place between the victim and the attacker. A small part of Goldie was glad the chairs were unrecognizable; Mother and Father never let her sit on them using the same excuse each time that they were either too big or too small for her. Scanning the room, Goldie struggled to accept the situation. Her state of mind mirrored the room she stood in; warped and fragmented. Goldie was a victim of frequent migraines and sometimes blackouts that she had no choice but to let wash over her like a wave. But in this moment she was drowning, trying to come up to the surface for clarity. She fell onto her knees gripping her head, praying for air and relief from the pain. Suffocating in sharp, piercing palpitations relentlessly beating against her head and her will to stay conscious; it had never been this bad before but she knew she could do nothing more than wait for the storm to pass. And soon enough it did and her mind was washed up on shore. As she opened her eyes and attempted to make sense of what happened here she noticed she was holding a small photograph which she identified as the family photo. Why was she holding this? She wondered as she got to her feet. She didn't remember having the picture in her possession

before her migraine which only added to her confusion.

What puzzled Goldie most was that someone had intentionally burnt two small holes into the photograph perfectly erasing the faces and identity of the two adults in the picture which Goldie knew were her parents. A tall and dominant Father stood with his arm around his wife whose smile appeared as genuine as her husband's embrace. In the foreground stood a golden-haired girl. The photo was almost unrecognizable but Goldie knew it was her family. She was certain that it was bears who had caused the damage to the house but with the discovery of the tainted photograph she just wasn't sure anymore. No longer could she suppress the thought that her parents might meet the same fate as their photographed remains.

She ran to the only room still uncharted: the bedroom.

As expected, the door was already open. The smell of blood scratched at her nose. The sound of bedroom curtains flailing in the singing wind only aroused her most feared suspicion. And the sight of two fully grown brown bears dominating the room only confused her; at first she thought they might be asleep as they were lying on her parents bed, one on each but she soon realised they were sleeping an eternal sleep. These bears were dead. They would never wake up. They would never trouble Goldie ever again.

Who had killed these feared forces of the forest? Goldie couldn't shake the confusion from her mind. Then, while scanning the room for evidence, she caught her own reflection in the mirror that hung just above the head of the bed. What shocked her most were her eyes. They were red. Her Mother often told Goldie that her eyes reminded her of the ocean: full of depths of rich blue capable of causing even the greatest of men to become lost at sea; but the ocean in her eyes had run dry and was now replaced by streams of bloodshot red. Feeling sick, like her throat may swallow itself, she tore away from her reflection and only then when she looked down did she see the knife in her hands. And just like her hands, it was painted with anger and still fresh with stolen life. The blood slid off the knife, not able to cling to the iridescent surface. The individual drops fell slowly one after the other then all at once, followed by the guilty metal released in surprise from Goldie's grip. Only when she looked up did she see the bears had been replaced by her parents.

Realization sank its teeth into her the way a bear catches a salmon after waiting for the right opportunity to strike

To Goldie's relief her head didn't hurt anymore, the confusion subsided and everything became clear and transparent. Her parents were dead and now she knew who killed them.

Goldie smiled as she locked the door to her Mother and Father's grave and left the Locks' cottage with a satisfied gait. She smiled and began to whistle again. Mother had always been a terribly cold woman, and Father always had a hot temper but now they were gone and for the first time in Goldie's life everything was

just right.

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