



Little Red

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Retold Fairy Tales

They'd called me Little Red for as long as I could remember, for the long red coats I'd worn since I was a child. They were a gift, from my grandmother. Every single Christmas, a new box would arrive, large and black, with a red bow. Inside, a new coat, and a note expressing Grandma's regards.

This year, however, the coat didn't come. Mom tried to call, to write, even had a wellness check done. After the check, Mom was told Grandma was fine. Mom's suspicions still ran rampant, however, so she packed me up in the car with a picnic basket and some clothes. Off to Grandmother's house I go.

The drive was long, through mostly woods and towns that looked deserted. Grandma lived alone, far from most of civilization, and never really left her house. I didn't remember the last time we'd seen her, but apparently Mom talked to her daily. I was about fifteen miles away when I saw her closest neighbor. Then, as I got closer, a man appeared on the side of the road. He was standing next to what looked like a broken down car, and was dressed very well.

This man appeared to be about my age, in a grey suit and tie, and was trying to flag me down. I figured I'd ought to stop, since it seemed like I was his only chance at seeing a passerby.

I pulled over near the man, and he's seemingly grateful. He opens my passenger door before I get the chance to lock it.

"Please, I need to use a phone. I think I blew my transmission." For some reason I don't question that this young, seemingly charming man is alone, four miles from the end of my grandmother's dead-end street without a cell phone. My phone's almost dead and I still need the navigation, so I end up with this stranger in my car, headed to grandma's house.

"I'm Wolff." He tells me, with a smile. There's something unsettling about how large his teeth are compared to the rest of his face, but I choose to ignore it.

"Red." I tell him as I speed up.

"Where are you headed, all alone, Red?" He asks me, and I kind of wish I'd let one of my friends tag along.

"To my Grandma's. She lives just at the end of this street." I tell him, speeding up to get to her sooner. There's safety in numbers, right?

"So it's just you and Grandma here, then?" Wolff asks, and I wonder if that was his real name.

"For a while, yes." I tell him.

"How nice." He tells me, and I'm starting to think that this creepy vibe I'm getting isn't just from being in the woods.

Grandma answers the door, dressed in a blue dress and one of those frilly old lady aprons. I'm trying to telepathically tell her that I'm uncomfortable, but she doesn't seem to notice.

"Red, darling, what a nice surprise." Grandma talks slowly, and she lights up when she sees Wolff, "And who is this?" She asks.

Wolff introduces himself, and I quickly interject to explain his situation. By this point, a snowstorm has started, and the tow truck company tells us they won't be out until at least the storm slows. According to my phone, that might take a couple days.

Even though I'm creeped out, Grandma, being the sweet old lady that she is, makes a bed for Wolff in the top of her old goat house. There's plenty of room inside, but Grandma has the sense to put him up where we can lock him out if we need to.

I spend the next two nights talking to Grandma, watching weird movies on my phone, texting my best friend from home, and avoiding Wolff as much as possible.

On day three, I wake up, and it feels like a miracle has happened. It's no longer snowing, which means we could be rid of Wolff any time now. Excited by the sun and anxious to get our guest on the road, I rush into Grandma's room early in the morning to tell her the news.

I close the door quietly behind me, not wanting it to slam and startle the old lady. I tiptoe over to the bed, but something feels off. Grandma must be laying at a weird angle, because she doesn't seem to be shaped right. I dismiss the thought and reach out to touch her shoulder. Just before my fingertips hit the covers, the figure sits up.

I want to scream, but I can't. It's Wolff, dressed in one of Grandma's nightgowns. He flashes that giant grin at me from under a wig of what appeared to be Grandma's real hair.

"Why Red, you're up early!" Wolff exclaims in a shrill falsetto. He's got a nail file in his right hand, just close enough to stab me with if I say the wrong thing.

"Y-Yes, Grandma, I wanted to show you that the snow is all done." I've got my phone in the pocket of my bathrobe, and I reach in to try and pocket dial the police.

"Silly girl, there are no phones at Grannie's!" Wolff sticks out his hand, I hesitate just a second too long, "I said GIVE. ME. THE. PHONE." Wolff drops out of his falsetto, grabbing my wrist, wrenching it out of my pocket, and throwing my phone to the floor. He gets out of the bed to get it, and I consider my options.

There's the window, but I'd have to walk past him to get to it. The door, which looks promising, except I'd have to outrun a grown man, and hope that he hadn't taken my keys already. On top of that, I didn't know where my actual Grandma was or what he had done to her.

"You're thinking about trying to run away from Grandma?" He asks, long teeth glimmering menacingly at me.

"I-" I start, but he cuts me off.

"Back in my day, little girls didn't get to drive. That's how it should be, don't you think?" He pauses, waiting for an answer, but I don't give one, "That's why I wrecked that horrid little death trap of yours. What was your mother thinking?" Wolff asks.

I'm staring at this point, wide-eyed and unsure of what to do. No car, no phone, no Grandma, and no prayer of outrunning this sycophant for fifteen miles to get to the nearest neighbor.

"Why don't we go make some eggs, dear?" Wolff asks, the nail file pressed into my back. I nod slowly, and he pushes me out of the room.

I spent the next two days cooking his food, cleaning various nightgowns for him to try on, brushing his hair, and pretending like this psycho was my Grandma. My real Grandma, nowhere to be found, was on my mind all the time. Did he kill her? It sure seemed like he was capable. Where was the body then? If she was alive, where was he keeping her? And how long did she have left?

It was just after dusk on the second night after Wolff's takeover when I tried to make my escape. He was keeping me locked in the small bedroom that used to be my mother's at night. The window was small, but so was I. If I could make it to the roof of the gazebo over the back patio, I'd be able to slide down the side and disappear into the woods. From there, I'd just have to hope I picked the right direction and that someone

found me before he did.

I had pried the window open using a piece of molding that I pulled loose from the wall. It squeaked a little, but nothing super audible. I was tying my sheets together to form a rope to get me down to the gazebo when I made my mistake. I hadn't seen the collection of diaries from my mom's childhood rapped under the fitted sheet. As I hastily pulled the sheet off, the five hard-covered journals rapped to the floor in turn.

Wolff's room being just across the hall from mine, I knew I didn't have much time. My only real option was going out the window on a still too short makeshift rope and hoping for the best. The sheets are already secured to the four-post bed, so I toss the loose end out the window. I climb on the edge of the radiator, then use my arms to support myself on the window ledge. I've just got my head through when the door opens. I didn't really have a plan for if I got caught before I made it out, and nothing was coming to me as Wolff grabbed my waist, throwing me back on the bed.

"Do you know what naughty little runaways get?" Wolff snarls. He seems much larger now than when we first met, but maybe my fear has something to do with it. He's pinning me, nail file in one hand, "Do you?" He yells a second time, raising my head by the hair and slamming me back into the mattress. I scream the second time, and there's a loud noise.

Thwack. Thwack. Thwack. I think Wolff must be kicking the bed, but I can't feel it shaking. A large crash happens, then there are splinters all over the room. I'm still screaming, Wolff is looking around confused, and then suddening, there's a splatter of blood and brain matter.

My best friend, Jack, stands in the doorway, covered in wood chips from the door he just broke down and blood from the beast he'd just murdered. We stare at each other in shock. Jack held an axe, probably from Grandma's wood shed, and paper directions to this house. I was in a nightgown (Wolff's choice) and was holding a queen-sized fitted sheet in my tightly grasped right hand.

"How did you know?" I ask, still trying to recover from the attack.

"You were texting me a few days ago and then it all stopped. Your mom couldn't get you. We thought you'd crashed on the way home. So I drove through the night." Jack looks rightfully shaken, and I think I might be sick.

"I found your car, crashed, about ten miles from here. When there was no one inside I decided to see if you made it. And...here we are. Where's your grandma?" Jack asks, suddenly noticing the lack of the old lady.

"I have no idea. Wolff either killed her or hid her." I tell Jack, and he's on the phone with the police before I

realize that I knew where she was.

The police have all sorts of questions for me, and for Jack, but things are sorted out rather quickly. Wolff, as it turned out, had a record. In true serial killer fashion, he moved states before going after more girls of his type, little, alone, and usually in red.

Once everything about Wolff is laid to rest, Jack and I set out in his truck. We're both covered in blood and disheveled, but the ride is safe and comfortable, a welcome surprise in the last few days. Jack pulls the truck over on the side of the road and hands me a flashlight. We cross the street, and we're at the spot where I first met Wolff.

There, wrapped up in a patchwork sack made of red coats, lay Grandma. As Jack cut Grandma free from the remnants of Wolff, I leaned against the truck, relieved that I had escaped, but somehow unsure that this was the end.

Sure enough, on the way back to Mom's house, with Grandma in tow, we passed a hitchhiker. He was about our age, dressed in a suit, and left in the dust as soon as we saw him. To this day, Jack and I still hope that no one else picked up a hitchhiker like Wolff. We certainly aren't taking any chances.

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