



The Littlest Red

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Retold Fairy Tales

The snow fell as he curled by the fire, his four tiny white paws twitching as he chased invisible rabbits across his dreams. The elderly lady chuckled at the white-haired pup and the snow feather-falling outside and set to work. She gathered together the bright red wool and thick needles from her basket beside her comfortable rocking chair – as opposed to the one she politely forced her guests to sit in on the rare occasions they appeared- and wove them lovingly together to fashion a tiny red collar and hood and peaked where the pup’s ears would prick up. It was the smallest red cloak she’d ever mad and the best because it fit him so snugly that the slumbering wolf didn’t even wake as she slipped it on. She smiled contentedly to herself, her wrinkled eyes creasing with affection and went to sleep.

As dawn turned the white world outside the cottage rosy, the wolf pup made his first steps of the day out of the door. He wagged his whole body in excited curiosity and the cold, cold, snow touched his nose, twitching his head to the side he barked at and pounced before skidding in the ice underneath. His red cloak slipped in front of his eyes and he nuzzled it into the ground because his human had made it for him and therefore, as far as he was concerned, it must smell only of him just like the rest of her house did. He knew she was frail, the winter had made her bones sore and she rarely played with him but he didn’t mind, she would still make things and watch him happily from the windows. The pup peered out into the world beyond the cottage gate and then back at his elderly carer beseechingly. She smiled and gave him the basket her knitting had been in the night before and watched him tumble through gates before heading back inside to make some tea.

“She needs some fish, I think the river is back here somewhere.” The pup murmured to himself. He was always

wary not to speak in front of people, they tended to react badly- his human had saved him the last time forgot that lesson in the first place- but he was very talkative when he was alone. He went singing away to the trees and made his way to the river not far from the path. It would have been a comical sight for any onlooker that happened by- the little pup, snowy white except for a vivid scarlet cloak and a coal black nose, was perched on the rocky river bank with his tail high in the air, paw outstretched over the rushing water. His was tongue caught between his teeth in concentration as he watched the fish below the surface get used to his presence. Quick as blinking he pounced and came back victorious with a big fish flopping in his mouth. He plopped it in the basket with a satisfied yip and tried again. He pounced twice more and caught three large, black fish for his troubles and before he went home he took a quick drink of the ice-cool water. He had just made it back to the edge of the path when he was startled by a noise. It was loud like thunder but didn't come with the comforting rain he was used to and it left a foul smell in the air. He focused on it, trying to find it but the smell burnt the inside of his nose and sent him running home without his basket.

When he arrived she was waiting for him as usual and bent down to scoop him up but all this made him do was stop dead and his ears drooped forward sorrowfully. He sniffled and turned away from her even as she held him close and took him inside saying everything would be okay and he could go back and get it tomorrow. The young pup just cried harder.

"I'm sorry," he said aloud although he thought he hadn't. She just smirked and scratched his ears in the way he liked best.

"No harm done, Little Red," She whispered back and kissed his head. He looked up at her his big eyes staring at her sweetly before he licked her nose and fell asleep in her lap til morning.

Morning came and with the pale winter sun that began melting the top layer of snow leaving the slippery grey slush to freeze hard and render his human housebound again. So, he set off to find more fish and the basket, promising to come back with them soon. The forest was quieter than it had been the day before but the smell still lingered in the air. This time, sensing that the basket would be in the same direction, the little pup followed it deeper into the woods. Keeping to the deeper snow, he tracked it to a small fire and a hulking great beast of a man who was polishing a long metal stick that stank of the scent that scared him so much the day before. He watched the man intently, he had a shaggy brown mane of matted hair, a thin angular face with a long hooked nose like a crow's beak and a cruel predatory look in his black eyes. It made the little pup shudder

when he saw where the basket and his fish were stowed away because it meant that he would have to get close to the creature. He gulped.

“Who’s there?” The man growled. There was nothing for it, the pup took a few paces forward and shook down his little red hood.

“I am.” He said sounding more assured than he felt. This didn’t put off the beast-man as he just laughed.

“Well, I never! A talking wolf, a puppy, but still. Why are you here?” He questioned his voice empty of all amusement.

“I want my basket and fish back.”

“Do you now? Well, I need the basket but you can have as much fish as you can carry little wolf if you come closer,” While the pup tried to work out exactly how much he could carry back with his hackles up to make himself as big as possible, he crept forward slowly never taking his eyes off the man.

“What a lovely cloak you have,” He said.

“Thank you,” the pup replied confused by the sudden shift.

“Oh and what a pretty collar you have too! All the better to catch you with I suppose!” The man roared and lunged at Little Red raking his huge hands across his back just as the pup grabbed the basket of fish. The pup fought to be free, thrashing this way and that, diving between the man’s legs to trip him up before finally catching the cloak on the ax embedded in a tree stump to the left and wrenching himself free. As fast as his little legs would carry him he dashed back the way he had come toward the cottage.

Twice more the hunter nearly caught Little Red and twice he had been left with nothing but scraps of cloth and new scratches for his efforts. Little Red leaped the gate and cried out for his human as he spiraled across the frozen slush before hitting the wall and scattering his prize. The elderly lady came scurrying out wrapped in shawls with her walking staff in her hand and scooped up the pup gently and searched him for wounds. All of a sudden the same ear-splitting sound came from the edge of the wood and something small but deadly came ricocheting across the snow before getting lodged in the door.

“Look out!!!!” Little Red howled in fright but his human shushed him and answered with a howl of her own as the hunter approached the gate. It echoed in the frigid night air the last striking notes dissolving seconds later.

“Hehehe you really are as mad as the stories say you old hag if you think that will save either you now.” The hunter cackled and went to open the gate when her howl was answered by over a dozen more. As Little Red peeked over the elderly lady’s protective arm he saw nearly twenty snowy white wolves emerge from all corners

of the landscape each with their own brilliantly red collars and he watched in awe as they descended upon the hunter in complete silence.

“Leave now Huntsman, this is your only opportunity.” She warned but he blanked her and began to load his gun. She let out a shrill whistle and soon all that was white became splattered with red as the wolves attacked and bellowed at him, “Stop attacking OUR lady!” and “Leave the pup alone!”. The lady of the wolves shielded Little Red and turned on her heel back into the house. Once safely inside, she sat in her comfortable rocking chair by the fire and set the basket down.

“I told you were my Littlest Red young wolf.”

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