



To kill a big bad wolf

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Retold Fairy Tales

5 min read

Rose adjusted her bloodstained hood and her dress. *The big bad wolf. Scary? Menacing? Hmph!* Rose gave a haughty scoff, picked up her basket and sprang towards her grandma's house.

Rose was surprised to say the least. *I have a grandma?*

Rose's parents, Dan and Florence, had told her that they were bringing her to the house of this old lady in the woods whom she was told, was her grandma.

"Why haven't I seen her or heard any of you mention her before?" Rose was intrigued with the idea of having a grandma. Not many people in the village had one as not many people lived past fifty.

"You have met her before, but, you were probably too young to remember. She's now very old and have trouble walking. We just found out over the last few days that she's really ill," Rose's mother explained without looking up from her laundry washing.

"Why didn't we get her to come stay with us in the first place?"

"Cause, this was what we agreed upon," her mother answered and seemed intent on not continuing the

conversation. She did not seem to like Rose's grandma; either that or she was focused on finishing her laundry fast.

This was before they set forth on their journey to visit her for the first time. Right before setting off, they had to drop off Violet, her little sister, at their neighbours' house. Then, they walked through the village to the part where a charred building stood. It was said to have been burned down in a fire that had broken out during an attack by the Big Bad Wolf many years ago, long before Rose was born.

Rose had always wondered why they did not rebuild that building. As badly burned and damaged the building was, she was pretty sure it wouldn't take more than a year to mend it. Some said that in their hurry to escape the Big Bad Wolf's attack, the occupants of the house had accidentally turned over a pot of food that they were cooking, resulting in the fire.

Judging from the many tombstones in the yard, Rose suspected that the occupants were all dead. The yard had been turned into a graveyard and every year around this time, they would hold an observance ceremony of sorts to remember those that were killed by the Big Bad Wolf.

Dan was awakened by the screams and it seemed like the rest of the village were too. His wife, Florence, sat up in bed and looked at him with a worried frown.

"Grab your pitchforks and axes!" Came the cries out on the streets.

Dan had heard these calls before. They were usually because wild animals had ventured into the village. He grabbed his trusty axe and instructed Florence to lock the door after he had left. After hearing the distinctive sound of a latch, Dan ran to where the commotion was.

On the way, a hobbling man ran in the opposite direction towards him. "It's a beast! A monster!" He bumped shoulders with Dan and toppled to the ground. The man looked up at Dan, revealing a face covered in sweat and a pair of eyes filled with terror before scurrying away in sprints and falls. Dan sensed the situation was more dire and urgent than he had anticipated and quickened his pace.

The flames of a blazing house—the house where the Jones lived—greeted him. A line of armed villagers stood

outside its fence, baring their weapon in an act of unity and bravado.

At first, Dan did not see who they were up against so he looked harder into the inferno. Then, he saw it.

Rose and her parents walked past the graveyard and followed the river that ran through the village out into the woods.

“We’re showing you the way so that eventually you will be responsible for sending food to her on your own. Along the way, be careful of any wild beasts. We have taught you how to wield your knife so always be ready to use it,” Her parents instructed her.

After they reached a small waterfall, they stopped following the water and instead went along the cliff and back into the woods again. The trek brought them to a tranquil clearing in the woods where time seemed to stand still. There was no sound of crickets or cicadas and the sunrays cracked through the towering coniferous trees, painting the morning with a dewy mist. In the middle of the clearing was a small cottage.

Dan ventured deep into the woods. As a woodcutter, he had often explored the forest and he remembered coming across an abandoned house once but had forgotten where it was.

After a whole day of searching, he finally found the cottage.

“Hello?” Dan gave a courtesy knock on the front door and waited for a while before admitting himself into the house.

It was a single room with clearly demarcated cooking, dining and sleeping area. There was furniture but most importantly, among all these, there was a bed.

This would be perfect.

Father knocked hard on the sturdy wooden door. “Gra...Mom, we’re here with Rose to see you.”

Both the adults took a step back from the door and Rose followed. It took a while before movement could be heard from inside the house.

The door eventually creaked open and the light unveiled a fragile and affable-looking old woman. “Oh is this Rose? Look at how grown-up she is. Come in, come in.”

Rose peered into the cottage as she entered. The interior was a mess and seemed like a huge battle had transpired. There was a small cooking area near the entrance where pots and pans were strewn all over the ashes of where the cooking fire might have been. Then, there was a table but with many of the chairs around it broken or turned over. Finally, a bed and a cupboard stood at the far end of the room beside a window. The blanket was covered in dust—as was most of the furniture—and looked like the elderly lady had laid there for ages without getting up.

Rose’s father clearly was not pleased with the state of the dwelling and pointedly commented, “...Mom, you could have at least kept the place more presentable.”

The right corner of grandma’s lips twitched into a smile. “I was asleep most of the time and no one else bothered to tidy up the place for me.”

Rose’s father gave a long sigh and turned one of the overturned chair with a frustrated kick. Rose’s parents seemed to have something weighing heavily on their mind and she suspected that it was because of her grandma’s condition.

It did not help that when Rose’s parents tried to feed her medicine, she simply refused. “Stop trying to feed me that poison! All I need is Rose and I’ll be fine.”

Rose’s father sighed in resignation. He looked to his wife who just shook her head and looked away. He dropped his shoulders and the medicine bottle, and then turned away.

Rose dusted the blankets and bedsheets and helped her grandma onto the bed. There, she sat by her and talked like all these years apart had never existed while her parents busied themselves with other things.

Her grandma told Rose that she simply loved the serenity in this part of the woods and refused to move because of it. Staring out of the window and hearing the total silence, Rose couldn't help but agree.

Occasionally Rose could hear her parents' indistinct quarrels from beyond the walls which broke the peace but she paid little heed to them.

In the end, Rose had spent a wonderful morning with her grandma till it was lunchtime. However, her grandma refused to eat her lunch and told them to leave the food there on the table and it would be taken care of once they leave.

"I like to spend time knowing what I am eating. Not knowing what I am eating leaves a bad taste in my mouth and I hate that," she added with a few short chuckles. So, the family of three said their goodbyes and left.

For the next few days, the same routine went on. Each day, Grandma would seem to get reinvigorated whenever she saw the little girl. She told Rose many things, some of which were puzzling to Rose and sounded every bit like her grandma had lost her marbles. There were words like, "I may look young but I'm actually very old; probably much older than you think I am."; "I don't like interacting with people too much so I'd rather stay in the woods away from them"; "I don't get hungry that easily. It's been almost a year since I last ate."

Nonetheless, Rose still gave polite giggles in response and enjoyed her time with her grandma in general.

And so, this routine continued for nearly a week.

Rose put on her crimson red hood as she could sense an eminent rain from the wind.

"Remember what we taught you." That day, after a week of her parents accompanying her, was to be the day they let her visit her grandma on her own. The whole week of visiting her had taken its toll on the family as her father had to set aside his woodcutting business while her mum's laundry and dishes had really piled up.

At the door, her parents gave her a big hug. She could feel her mother trembling, so she quizzically looked over

at her father but he looked away. There was an ominous air about the room like they expected nothing better of grandma's condition.

Without uttering another word, her mother passed her the basket she was holding and waved goodbye with redness in her eyes.

Rose plodded her way out of the house in uneven steps, with her mind far away. As she passed by the graveyard, it seemed the wind had blown down a tombstone as some villagers were working on it against the gushing wind.

When Rose reached the waterfalls, she was surprised to see a huge hairy beast standing in an upright position, leaning against a tree. She knew that it had to be the Big Bad Wolf and eyeballed it, hearing her heart drumming fervently in her ears.

"Don't look at me like I'm going to eat you..."

She kicked with her heel to a halt. "You can talk!?"

"Oh Rose, I've been around for long enough. It's not surprising that I have picked up some words or two."

"You... you know my name!?" Rose asked with a raised eyebrow.

"Come on, you've been walking through these woods the whole of last week with your parents. You didn't think I wouldn't have heard your name being called by your parents, echoing through the woods, do you? And like I said, stop looking at me like I'm going to eat you. And don't think I don't know your father's the woodcutter. His strong arms on that axe would cut me into half if I had attempted to eat you."

She was thankful that the one person in the village that the wolf seemed to fear was her father. He was as strong and big as they came with a bear-like build and arms as big as rocks. She was told the villagers had tried to kill the Big Bad Wolf many times but it had always eluded them.

"Think about it. There are hares and deers in these woods that I can easily feast on. I've got to be really hungry to want to gnaw on those skinny bones of your little body."

She looked at her right arm and at the left arm that had been imprinted red by the weight of the basket.

That's true. I really don't look that appetizing.

“A little girl like you travelling alone in the woods, it's going to be dangerous you know, so I'm just here to offer you my protection. I'm sure you can tell that I'm your friend.”

There was a soothing tone of genuinity and a sense of familiarity in his words so she decided to let down her guard a little and asked, “What else could be more dangerous than the Big Bad Wolf?”

“Ha! Ha! Ha! Is that what they call me? Well for one, your family and friends. Don't you agree that humans with all their evil intentions and desires can be scarier than some 'Big Bad Wolf?’”

Rose's face was contorted in such a way that spoke of disagreement so it immediately added, “Or tigers? Or maybe... monsters?”

That was when she let out a laugh.

“What? You don't believe me?”

“There are no monsters in this world,” she confidently declared.

“Ha! Ha! Ha! No monsters?! Are you sure? Then, bears. Look, I like you Rose. Look at the sky, it's going to rain heavily. Take your basket, go back home and tell them to send someone else.”

Rose looked up at the dark clouds that were flickering with sporadic flashes and deliberated for a moment.

“Hmm. Since you said you're helping me, would you like to help me pass this basket to my grandma on my behalf?”

The wolf chuckled, “I don't see why not!” Rose marched up to the wolf. *Remember what they taught. Remember they taught.*

Rose stretched out her left hand to pass the basket. In a swift motion, a knife slid out from the mantle of the hood and dropped to under the basket on her left. Her right hand grabbed it in mid-air and before the beast could react, she stabbed the knife into the chest of the wolf. The wolf growled, paralyzed by shock. Seizing the

opportunity, Rose continued to deliver a few more stabs to ensure fatality.

“You! Ha! Ha... Ha! You killed me...!?” With a look of bewilderment, the wolf took two steps backwards and toppled into the waterfalls behind it, its lifeless body consumed by the torrential waters.

Rose stared at the blood on her hand and could not help but feel invincible.

Rose put down her fork and spoon slowly. “Dad, I want to be a bait to lure the Big Bad Wolf and kill it to protect Grandma.”

Rose’s mother and father put down their forks and spoons as well. “Why are we suddenly talking about this?”

“Just now while picking Violet up,” Rose said as she glanced over at her sister who was still focused on her dinner, “I overheard the neighbours saying that the Big Bad Wolf was recently sighted again. I can’t sleep in peace knowing that Grandma is alone with the Big Bad Wolf still out there!”

“Don’t worry, the Big Bad Wolf won’t be interested to gnaw at those raggedy bones of your grandma,” dismissed her father.

“Then for the villagers!” She grabbed his arm as she pleaded, nearly in tears.

Her father gently pushed her hand away and said, “Don’t waste your time. We’ve tried. You can’t kill the Big Bad Wolf!”

I, have killed the Big Bad Wolf!

Rose clutched on to her hood as she sprinted to her grandma’s house. When she got to the cottage, she shouted in eagerness, “Grandma! Grandma! I’ve got great news to tell you!... Grandma?”

The sky above looked menacingly dark and threatened to dispense its load anytime. She continued knocking on the door and calling out for her grandma but there was no response.

Lightning. Thunder. Then came the drizzle.

Somehow Rose had a sinking feeling that she had arrived too late that day.

Florence wailed, "We've killed her... we've killed her..."

Her husband looked on blankly and hugged her close. "Darling, we had no choice... We have no choice." The second time around sounded much less convincing than the first and seemed to be said to no one in particular.

Yes. We have killed her...

Rose ungrasp her right hand from her hood and used the hand to nudge the door open. A musty and pungent smell escaped the house. She stood at the door staring into the room filled with darkness, casted by the storm clouds looming overhead.

She decided to try one more time. "Grandma?"

A hoarse voice suddenly replied, "Yes? Yes? Is that Rose my dear?"

She lunged forward into the darkness of the room. It took some effort for her to grope around and make her way to the bed where her grandma was.

"Grandma what happened to you?" Rose was gripping on to the bedsheet and spoke in the general direction of where the voice came from.

"I've been feeling really sick and I think I'm down to my last few breaths."

"Grandma, don't say that. You're definitely in the pink of health."

A flash of lightning flared through the window. In that instance of illumination, Rose thought she saw her grandma in a different light.

“Grandma, what big eyes you have!”

“The better to see you, my dear.”

“...and what big ears you have.”

“The better to hear you.”

“Your teeth!! AHHH!!”

Dan saw the gigantic wolf as it walked upright out of the burning house with something that looked like a human limb in its grip. As it stepped through a burning door, its fur singed with a disintegrating glow. However, as it stepped away from the flames, its grey fur seemingly grew back to its original length.

It took a forceful bite off the limb it was carrying. Blood splattered out from its mouth as it chewed hard before spitting something out.

“That tasted horrible!”

It can talk! The same thought seemed to run through everyone’s minds as the villagers readied their offensive position with their makeshift weapons.

“Oh? Am I too scary for your liking? How about this?” As the wolf uttered those words, it transformed into an old lady.

Old Mrs Jones!

In a feeble voice, she said, “I’m hungry and weak after my long slumber and need some human essence to feed on. I’ve had enough of killing for a day, so let’s strike a deal; find me a place to sleep in peace so that I don’t wake up and get all hungry. Then send me a child every year and I’ll spare everyone else in the village.”

“Well let me spare everyone else for ye!” Mr. Boucher, the village butcher charged forward with his chopper and made a clean cut from the neck down to the chest of the old lady who had just stood there offering no

resistance.

The wound around the chopper melded and suddenly the chopper was stuck right in her body. Mr. Boucher let go of his chopper as if it was burning. He looked up from his chopper and came face to face with the old woman.

“Tell me, what’s your name?” She asked calmly. When no response came, the old lady repeated her question again, this time, more emphatically.

“... John... Boucher.”

In one motion, the old lady opened her mouth so wide that it engulfed Mr. Boucher and swallowed him in one gobble. “Now that tastes so much better.”

Several men in the line dropped their weapons as their legs gave way. Audible gasps and chokes could be heard over the crackling fire. Slowly the monster removed the chopper that was stuck in its body and turned to its audience.

“So do we have a deal?”

Florence stood by the tombstone that the other villagers had erected. After a brief drizzle, a downpour had begun. Somehow, it always seemed to rain a lot this time of the year.

Good. At least no one will see me cry.

Little Violet was holding her with Dan beside her. The little girl noticed her mother crying and asked, “Mommy, are you crying? Where’s Rose?”

Yes. Rose always knew what to do. “Rose is in a better place now, Violet.”

“Where? Can we go too?”

I wish. But we've all made a pact with the devil... “No, darling, we've all agreed not to leave the village...” *or the other villagers will kill us.*

A man who was kneeling with his carving tool at the tombstone looked up and asked, “Dan, Florence, what would you like engraved?”

I wished it could have been me... Sorry, Rose. Florence crumpled to the ground and began to cry freely. In between sobs, she answered, “For she blossomed bright crimson, so those she cared could be spared.”

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