The Little Red Cap

Once upon a time there was a very beautiful and kind little girl, whom her mother and grandmother loved dearly. The good little grandmother, who spent her time imagining what might please her granddaughter, one day gave her a red velvet cap. The little one was so happy with her new cap that she no longer wanted to wear any other, and they began to call her the girl of the little red cap.

The mother and grandmother lived in two houses separated by a forest half a league long. One morning the mother said to the little one:

"— Your grandmother is sick and could not come to see us. I made these sweets, go take them to her with this bottle of wine. Be careful not to break the bottle, don't run, go slowly and come back soon."

"— Yes, mama," she replied, "I will do everything as you wish."

She tied her apron, put the bottle and the sweets in a little basket, and set off. In the middle of the forest a wolf approached her. The little one, who had never seen wolves, looked at him without any fear.

"— Good day, little red cap."

"— Good day, sir," the little one replied politely.

"— Where are you going so early?"

"— To my grandmother's house, who is sick."

"— And are you taking her something?"

"— Yes, sir; I'm taking her some cakes and a bottle of wine to give her strength."

"Tell me where your grandmother lives, for I want to go see her too."

"— It's near, here at the end of the forest. There are some very large oaks nearby, and in the garden there are many walnuts."

"— Ah! you are a beautiful walnut yourself," the wolf said to himself. "How I would like to eat you." Then he continued aloud: "Look at those beautiful trees and those lovely little birds. How pleasant it is to walk in the forests, and then what a quantity of medicinal plants one finds!"

"— Sir, you are certainly a doctor," replied the innocent little one, "since you know medicinal herbs. Perhaps you could point out one that would do my grandmother good."

"— Certainly, my child, look, here is one, and this one too, and that one." But all the plants the wolf pointed out were poisonous. The poor child wanted to pick them to take to her grandmother.

"— Goodbye, my dear little red cap, I was very glad to meet you. With great regret I must leave you to go see a patient."

And he ran off toward the grandmother's house, while the little one amused herself picking the plants he had pointed out.

When the wolf reached the old woman's door, he found it closed and knocked, but the grandmother could not get out of bed, and asked: "Who is there?"

"— It's little red cap," the wolf replied, imitating the little one's voice. "Mama sends you cakes and a bottle of wine."

"— Look under the door," said the grandmother, "you will find the key."

He found it, opened the door, swallowed the poor old woman whole in one gulp, and then, putting on the clothes she usually wore, lay down in bed.

A little later the little one entered, frightened and amazed to find the door open, because she knew how carefully the grandmother usually kept it closed.

The wolf had put a cap on his head, which hid part of his snout, but what remained uncovered was horrible.

"— Oh! little grandmother," said the child, "why do you have such big ears?"

"— So that I can hear you better, my child."

"— And why do you have such big eyes?"

"— So that I can see you better."

"— And why do you have such big arms?"

"— So that I can hug you better."

"— And Jesus! why do you have such a big mouth today and such sharp teeth?"

"— So that I can eat you better." At these words the wolf threw himself at the poor little one and swallowed her. As he was full, he fell asleep and began to snore very loudly. A hunter who happened to be passing near the house and heard that noise

said to himself: "The poor old woman is having a nightmare, she is perhaps worse, I will see if she needs anything." He enters and sees the wolf stretched out on the bed.

"— Hello, my boy," he says: "I have been looking for you for a long time."

He cocked his rifle, but stopping immediately: "No," he said, "I don't see the lady of the house. Perhaps the wolf swallowed her alive." And instead of killing the animal with a bullet, he took his hunting knife and carefully opened its belly. Little red cap appeared at once and jumped to the floor, shouting:

"— Oh! what a frightful place I have been shut in!"

The grandmother also came out very happy to see the light of day again.

The wolf was still sleeping deeply, and the hunter then put two large stones in his belly, sewed everything up, and hid with the grandmother and granddaughter to see what would happen.

After a moment the wolf woke up, and as he was thirsty, he got up to go drink at the lake. As he walked he heard the stones knocking against each other, and could not understand what that was; with the weight, he fell into the lake and drowned.

The hunter skinned him, ate the cakes and drank the wine with the old woman and her granddaughter. The old woman felt rejuvenated, and little red cap promised never to go through the forest again when her mother forbade it.

One day Charles the Great was hunting with a numerous retinue, he pursued a deer, which gave such leaps and ran in such a way that, despite the swiftness of his horse, the king completely lost track of it. It was only then that he saw he was alone, his court having stayed far behind; feeling tired, he entered at nightfall a solitary hut in the middle of the forest. Around the fireplace lay four thieves. The robbers got up immediately, as if awakened by the noise of the traveler's entrance; each of them had had a dream, which they immediately wanted to tell him.

The first to speak expressed himself in this way:

"— In my dream, I was taking the golden helmet from the person who has just entered here, and putting it on my head."

"— I," said the other, "dreamed that I was wearing his cuirass."

"— And I was putting on his cloak."

"— And I," said the fourth thief, "to do him a favor, was passing around my neck that one."