

The Wolf, the Goat and the Kids (Aesop)

Mother Goat was going to market one morning to get provisions for her household.

“Take good care of the house, my son,” she said to her three little kids, as she carefully latched the door. “Do not let anyone in, unless he gives you this password: ‘Down with the Wolf and all his race!’”

Strangely enough, a Wolf was lurking near and heard what the Goat had said. So, as soon as Mother Goat was out of sight, up he trotted to the door and knocked.

“Down with the Wolf and all his race,” said the Wolf softly.

It was the right password, but when the kids peeped through a crack in the door and saw the shadowy figure outside, they did not feel at all easy.

“Show me a white paw,” said the eldest, “or I won’t let you in.”

A white paw, of course, is a feature few Wolves can show, and so Master Wolf had to go away as hungry as he had come.

“You can never be too sure,” said the eldest kid to his siblings, when he saw the Wolf making off to the woods.

Moral: Two sureties are better than one.

The Story of Grandmother (French oral tradition)

There was once a woman who had made some bread. She said to her daughter: "Take this loaf of hot bread and this bottle of milk over to granny's."

The little girl left. At the crossroads she met a wolf, who asked: "Where are you going?"

"I'm taking a loaf of hot bread and a bottle of milk to granny's."

"Which path are you going to take," asked the wolf, "the path of needles or the path of pins?"

"The path of needles," said the little girl.

"Well, then, I'll take the path of pins."

The little girl had fun picking up needles. Meanwhile, the wolf arrived at granny's, killed her, put some of her flesh in the pantry and a bottle of her blood on the shelf. The little girl got there and knocked at the door.

"Push the door," said the wolf, "it's latched with a wet straw."

"Hello, granny. I'm bringing you a loaf of hot bread and a bottle of milk."

"Put it in the pantry, my child. Take some of the meat in there along with the bottle of wine on the shelf."

There was a little cat in the room who watched her eat and said: "Phooey! You're a slut if you eat the flesh and drink the blood of granny."

"Take your clothes off, my child," said the wolf, "and come into bed with me."

"Where should I put my apron?"

"Throw it into the fire, my child. You won't be needing it any longer."

When she asked the wolf where to put all her other things, her bodice, her dress, her skirt, and her stockings, each time he said: "Throw them into the fire, my child. You won't be needing them any longer."

"Oh, granny, how hairy you are!"

"The better to keep me warm, my child!"

"Oh, granny, what long nails you have!"

"The better to scratch myself with, my child!"

"Oh, granny, what big shoulders you have!"

"The better to carry firewood with, my child!"

"Oh, granny, what big ears you have!"

"The better to hear you with, my child!"

"Oh, granny, what big nostrils you have!"

"The better to sniff my tobacco with, my child!"

"Oh, granny, what a big mouth you have!"

"The better to eat you with, my child!"

"Oh, granny, I need to go badly. Let me go outside!"

"Do it in the bed, my child."

"No, granny, I want to go outside."

"All right, but don't stay out long."

The wolf tied a rope made of wool to her leg and let her go outside.

When the little girl got outside, she attached the end of the rope to a plum tree in the yard. The wolf became impatient and said: "Are you making cables out there? Are you making cables?"

When he realized that there was no answer, he jumped out of bed and discovered that the little girl had escaped. He followed her, but he reached her house only after she had gotten inside.

Little Red Riding Hood (Charles Perrault 1697)

Once upon a time there lived in a certain village a little country girl, the prettiest creature who was ever seen. Her mother was excessively fond of her; and her grandmother doted on her still more. This good woman had a little red riding hood made for her. It suited the girl so extremely well that everybody called her Little Red Riding Hood.

One day her mother, having made some cakes, said to her, "Go, my dear, and see how your grandmother is doing, for I hear she has been very ill. Take her a cake, and this little pot of butter."

Little Red Riding Hood set out immediately to go to her grandmother, who lived in another village.

As she was going through the wood, she met with a wolf, who had a very great mind to eat her up, but he dared not, because of some woodcutters working nearby in the forest. He asked her where she was going. The poor child, who did not know that it was dangerous to stay and talk to a wolf, said to him, "I am going to see my grandmother and carry her a cake and a little pot of butter from my mother."

"Does she live far off?" said the wolf

"Oh I say," answered Little Red Riding Hood; "it is beyond that mill you see there, at the first house in the village."

"Well," said the wolf, "and I'll go and see her too. I'll go this way and go you that, and we shall see who will be there first."

The wolf ran as fast as he could, taking the shortest path, and the little girl took a roundabout way, entertaining herself by gathering nuts, running after butterflies, and gathering bouquets of little flowers. It was not long before the wolf arrived at the old woman's house. He knocked at the door: tap, tap.

"Who's there?"

"Your grandchild, Little Red Riding Hood," replied the wolf, counterfeiting her voice; "who has brought you a cake and a little pot of butter sent you by mother."

The good grandmother, who was in bed, because she was somewhat ill, cried out, "Pull the bobbin, and the latch will go up."

The wolf pulled the bobbin, and the door opened, and then he immediately fell upon the good woman and ate her up in a moment, for it been more than three days since he had eaten. He then shut the door and got into the grandmother's bed, expecting Little Red Riding Hood, who came some time afterwards and knocked at the door: tap, tap.

"Who's there?"

Little Red Riding Hood, hearing the big voice of the wolf, was at first afraid; but believing her grandmother had a cold and was hoarse, answered, "It is your grandchild Little Red Riding Hood, who has brought you a cake and a little pot of butter mother sends you."

The wolf cried out to her, softening his voice as much as he could, "Pull the bobbin, and the latch will go up."

Little Red Riding Hood pulled the bobbin, and the door opened.

The wolf, seeing her come in, said to her, hiding himself under the bedclothes, "Put the cake and the little pot of butter upon the stool, and come get into bed with me."

Little Red Riding Hood took off her clothes and got into bed. She was greatly amazed to see how her grandmother looked in her nightclothes, and said to her, "Grandmother, what big arms you have!"

"All the better to hug you with, my dear."

"Grandmother, what big legs you have!"

"All the better to run with, my child."

"Grandmother, what big ears you have!"

"All the better to hear with, my child."

"Grandmother, what big eyes you have!"

"All the better to see with, my child."

"Grandmother, what big teeth you have got!"

"All the better to eat you up with."

And, saying these words, this wicked wolf fell upon Little Red Riding Hood, and ate her all up.

Moral: Children, especially attractive, well bred young ladies, should never talk to strangers, for if they should do so, they may well provide dinner for a wolf. I say "wolf," but there are various kinds of wolves. There are also those who are charming, quiet, polite, unassuming, complacent, and sweet, who pursue young women at home and in the streets. And unfortunately, it is these gentle wolves who are the most dangerous ones of all.

The False Grandmother (Italian oral tradition)

A mother had to sift flour, and told her little girl to go to her grandmother's and borrow the sifter. The child packed a snack - ring-shaped cakes and bread with oil - and set out.

She came to the Jordan River.

"Jordan River, will you let me pass?"

"Yes, if you give me your ring-shaped cakes."

The Jordan River had a weakness for ring-shaped cakes, which he enjoyed twirling in his whirlpools.

The child tossed the ring-shaped cakes into the river, and the river lowered its waters and let her through.

The little girl came to the Rake Gate.

"Rake Gate, will you let me pass?"

"Yes, if you give me your bread with oil."

The Rake Gate had a weakness for bread with oil, since her hinges were rusty, and bread with oil oiled them for her.

The little girl gave the gate her bread with oil, and the gate opened and let her through.

She reached her grandmother's house, but the door was shut tight.

"Grandmother, Grandmother, come let me in."

"I'm in bed sick. Come through the window."

"I can't make it."

"Come through the cat door."

"I can't squeeze through."

"Well, wait a minute," she said, and lowered a rope, by which she pulled the little girl up through the window. The room was dark. In bed was the ogress, not the grandmother, for the ogress had gobbled up Grandmother all in one piece from head to toe, all except her teeth, which she had put on to stew in a small stew pan, and her ears, which she had put on to fry in a frying pan.

"Grandmother, Mamma wants the sifter."

"It's late now. I'll give it to you tomorrow. Come to bed."

"Grandmother, I'm hungry, I want my supper first."

"Eat the beans boiling in the boiler."

In the pot were the teeth. The child stirred them around and said, "Grandmother, they're too hard."

"Well, eat the fritters in the frying pan."

In the frying pan were the ears. The child felt them with the fork and said, "Grandmother, they're not crisp."

"Well, come to bed. You can eat tomorrow."

The little girl got into bed beside Grandmother. She felt one of her hands and said, "Why are your hands so hairy, Grandmother?"

"From wearing too many rings on my fingers."

She felt her chest. "Why is your chest so hairy, Grandmother?"

"From wearing too many necklaces around my neck."

She felt her hips. "Why are your hips so hairy, Grandmother?"

"Because I wore my corset too tight."

She felt her tail and reasoned that, hairy or not, Grandmother had never had a tail. That had to be the ogress and nobody else. So she said, "Grandmother, I can't go to sleep unless I first go and take care of a little business."

Grandmother replied, "Go do it in the barn below. I'll let you down through the trapdoor and then draw you back up."

She tied a rope around her and lowered her into the barn. The minute the little girl was down she untied the rope and in her place attached a nanny goat. "Are you through?" asked Grandmother.

"Just a minute." She finished tying the rope around the nanny goat. "There, I've finished. Pull me back up."

The ogress pulled and pulled, and the little girl began yelling, "Hairy ogress! Hairy ogress!" She threw open the barn and fled. The ogress kept pulling, and up came the nanny goat. She jumped out of bed and ran after the little girl.

When the child reached the Rake Gate, the ogress yelled from a distance: "Rake Gate, don't let her pass!"

But the Rake Gate replied, "Of course I'll let her pass; she gave me her bread with oil."

When the child reached the Jordan River, the ogress shouted, "Jordan River, don't you let her pass!"

But the Jordan River answered, "Of course I'll let her pass; she gave me her ring-shaped cakes."

When the ogress tried to get through, the Jordan River did not lower his waters, and the ogress was swept away in the current. From the bank the little girl made faces at her.

Grandmother Tiger (China)

Once upon a time there lived a woman with three children. One day, as it was grandmother's birthday, the mother went back to see her, leaving the three children at home.

"Sheng, Dou, Boji, my sweet babies," she said to them before she left, "now mind you're good while I'm away. Be sure to shut the door and latch it tight when the sun goes down. Mama won't be back tonight."

No sooner had the mother left than an old tiger who lived in the mountains heard the news.

When dusk fell, this old tiger, disguised as an old woman, came to their house. "Rap, rap!..." she knocked at the door.

"Who's there?" asked Sheng.

"Sheng, Dou, Boji, my little darlings, it's your grandmother."

"Oh, grannie," said Sheng, "mama has gone to see you."

"To see me? Well, I must have come one way while she went another," said the tiger. "I never met her."

"Grannie," asked Sheng, "why do you come at this hour, so late at night? Why didn't you come earlier?"

"The way is long but the day is short. By the time I got here, it was already dark," the tiger replied.

Sheng suspected something from the voice. It did not sound like her grandmother's, so she said: "Grannie, grannie, why is your voice different today?"

"Grannie's got a cold. My nose is stuffed up and I can't speak properly!" answered the tiger, going on cunningly. "Dear children, it is dark and windy out here. Open the door quickly and let grannie enter!"

Sheng was still suspicious and wanted to ask more first, but Dou and Boji were impatient. One released the hatch and the other opened the door wide. "Grannie, grannie, come in!" they shouted.

As soon as the tiger stepped into the house she blew the light out.

"Grannie, we need the light in the room! Why did you blow it out?" asked Sheng.

"Grannie's eyes are sore, I cannot bear the light," replied the old tiger.

Sheng felt for the bench and pulled it forward for her grandmother to sit on.

As she flung herself down on the bench, the tiger hurt her tail and cried out with pain.

"What is the matter, grannie?" asked Sheng.

"Grannie's got a nasty boil, dearie. I think I'll be better sitting on this basket," answered grannie, sitting down again as she spoke. Her tail hung down inside and knocked the sides.

"Grannie, what is that noise in the basket?" asked Sheng.

"That's a hen grannie brought you," was the answer.

Sheng stretched out her arm to catch the hen but the old tiger hurriedly stopped her, saying: "Don't touch it or it'll fly away across the river."

Dou and Boji went to the tiger, and wanted her to pick them up.

"What a nice child! So plump and fat," said the old tiger, stroking Dou. "And what a sweet baby you are, Boji, so pretty and healthy." She put her front paws around Boji and said, "Dear child, grannie loves you! Grannie's going to take you into her bed tonight!" She pretended to yawn and said: "All the chickens are in their coops and the sleepworm is in my head. Come on, my dear children, bed time!"

The tiger took Boji with her, and Sheng took Dou. The tiger and Boji slept at the one end of the bed, and Sheng and Dou slept at the other.

Sheng put her legs out straight and felt a big fluffy tail with her toes.

"Grannie, grannie, whatever's that fluffy thing on you?" she cried.

"Grannie makes jute rope, you know," answered the tiger. "I brought along a bunch of jute with me."

As Sheng moved her arm, she touched the sharp claws on 'grandmother's' feet.

"Grannie, grannie, whatever makes your feet so prickly?"

"Grannie sews shoes, and always carries an awl with her."

Sheng lit the light and saw that 'grannie' had hair all over her head and face.

Frightened at the light, the tiger hurried to blow it out. Sheng thought of a way to escape, and quickly sat up, holding Boji. "Ah," she said, "Boji wants to wee-wee!"

"Let her do it under the bed," said the tiger.

"She can't! There is the God of the Bed under there," said Sheng.

"Let her do it by the window then," said the tiger.

"There is the Window God there," answered Sheng.

"Behind the door, then," said the tiger.

"There's the Door God there," was the reply.

"Go out to the kitchen!" said the tiger.

"There's the Kitchen God," said Sheng.

"Take her outside then," said the tiger.

"Dou, Dou," yelled Sheng, "take Boji out, she's got to go."

So Dou took Boji out. They climbed a ginko tree to hide.

The tiger grew impatient, and so decided to follow them outside. She looked up and saw them in the tree. "What are you doing up there silly children!" she cried.

"Grannie, grannie," said Sheng, "have you ever eaten ginkgo nuts?"

"What's ginkgo?"

"Oh, it is wonderful! It is as soft and tender as a baby's skin and if you take but one piece you will become a fairy and live forever."

"Does it taste better than human flesh?" asked the tiger.

"Yes, much better."

"Do you know where you can get it then?" asked the tiger.

"Oh yes, it grows on trees," said Sheng.

"Oh dear! Grannie is old, and her bones are stiff! She can't climb trees," said the tiger with a sigh.

The tiger paced backwards and forwards under the tree, her mouth watering. There was a pause and then Sheng said, "Grannie, grannie, I have an idea. There is a wicker-basket by the doorstep, and a piece of rope behind it. Tie the rope on the basket, bring it over here, and then you can sit in it and throw the other end of the rope up to me. We'll pull you up here."

"Good child! That's a fine idea!" said the tiger, cheering up, and going over to get the basket and the rope.

She threw the rope up to Sheng, and Sheng began to pull her up. Half way up, she let go, and down fell the tiger, getting a bad shaking.

"Oh!" cried Sheng, pretending to be sorry. "I'm not very big, nor very strong. Poor grannie! You must be badly hurt."

"Grannie," said Dou, "let's try again. This time I'll help sister to pull."

The tiger had only one thought: she wanted the ginkgo, so she got back into the basket again and Sheng and Dou pulled on the rope together. They pulled the basket up higher this time before they let go of the rope. Down it went again with a heavy thud. This time the tiger broke one of her legs and hit her head. She was very angry, and began to swear terribly.

"Don't be so upset, grannie!" begged Sheng.

"One ginkgo nut will make you quite well again," said Dou.

"I'll help my sisters to pull!" put in Boji.

"This time we'll be sure not to fail," said Sheng.

With a terrible curse, the tiger threw herself into the basket again. "Be careful, be careful!" she howled. "I'll make you sorry! I'll bite your heads off, one by one."

The children all held the rope and pulled for all they were worth. "Hai-yo, hai-yo," they sang as they hauled. Up went the basket...higher than the first time...higher than the second time...and still higher, until it was thirty feet from the ground. Stretching out her front paws, the tiger could almost reach the branches of the tree.

It was just then that Sheng gave a cough. They all three let go together, and the basket crashed down. The tiger's skull was broken and her stomach split open.

"Grannie!" called Sheng. There was no answer. "Grannie!" called Dou. Still no answer. "Grannie!" called Boji. No answer. The children all climbed over to have a good look at the tiger. She was quite dead.

They scrambled down the tree happily, went in and shut the door, latched it tight and went to sleep in peace.

The next day their mother returned. She brought back lots of nice things for them to eat from their real grannie.

As they sat enjoying the sweetmeats, they told their mother all about their adventure.

Little Red Cap (Jacob Grimm & Wilhelm Grimm 1812)

Once upon a time there was a sweet little girl. Everyone who saw her liked her, but most of all her grandmother, who did not know what to give the child next. Once she gave her a little cap made of red velvet. Because it suited her so well, and she wanted to wear it all the time, she came to be known as Little Red Cap.

One day her mother said to her, "Come Little Red Cap. Here is a piece of cake and a bottle of wine. Take them to your grandmother. She is sick and weak, and they will do her well. Mind your manners and give her my greetings. Behave yourself on the way, and do not leave the path, or you might fall down and break the glass, and then there will be nothing for your sick grandmother."

Little Red Cap promised to obey her mother. The grandmother lived out in the woods, a half hour from the village. When Little Red Cap entered the woods a wolf came up to her. She did not know what a wicked animal he was, and was not afraid of him.

"Good day to you, Little Red Cap."

"Thank you, wolf."

"Where are you going so early, Little Red Cap?"

"To grandmother's."

"And what are you carrying under your apron?"

"Grandmother is sick and weak, and I am taking her some cake and wine. We baked yesterday, and they should give her strength."

"Little Red Cap, just where does your grandmother live?"

"Her house is a good quarter hour from here in the woods, under the three large oak trees. There's a hedge of hazel bushes there. You must know the place," said Little Red Cap.

The wolf thought to himself, "Now there is a tasty bite for me. Just how are you going to catch her?" Then he said, "Listen, Little Red Cap, haven't you seen the beautiful flowers that are blossoming in the woods? Why don't you go and take a look? And I don't believe you can hear how beautifully the birds are singing. You are walking along as though you were on your way to school in the village. It is very beautiful in the woods."

Little Red Cap opened her eyes and saw the sunlight breaking through the trees and how the ground was covered with beautiful flowers. She thought, "If I take a bouquet to grandmother, she will be very pleased. Anyway, it is still early, and I'll be home on time." And she ran off into the woods looking for flowers. Each time she picked one she thought that she could see an even more beautiful one a little way off, and she ran

after it, going further and further into the woods. But the wolf ran straight to the grandmother's house and knocked on the door.

"Who's there?"

"Little Red Cap. I'm bringing you some cake and wine. Open the door for me."

"Just press the latch," called out the grandmother. "I'm too weak to get up."

The wolf pressed the latch, and the door opened. He stepped inside, went straight to the grandmother's bed, and ate her up. Then he took her clothes, put them on, and put her cap on his head. He got into her bed and pulled the curtains shut.

Little Red Cap had run after flowers, and did not continue on her way to grandmother's until she had gathered all that she could carry. When she arrived, she found, to her surprise, that the door was open. She walked into the parlor, and everything looked so strange that she thought, "Oh, my God, why am I so afraid? I usually like it at grandmother's." Then she went to the bed and pulled back the curtains. Grandmother was lying there with her cap pulled down over her face and looking very strange.

"Oh, grandmother, what big ears you have!"

"All the better to hear you with."

"Oh, grandmother, what big eyes you have!"

"All the better to see you with."

"Oh, grandmother, what big hands you have!"

"All the better to grab you with!"

"Oh, grandmother, what a horribly big mouth you have!"

"All the better to eat you with!" And with that he jumped out of bed, jumped on top of poor Little Red Cap, and ate her up. As soon as the wolf had finished this tasty bite, he climbed back into bed, fell asleep, and began to snore very loudly.

A huntsman was just passing by. He thought it strange that the old woman was snoring so loudly, so he decided to take a look. He stepped inside, and in the bed there lay the wolf that he had been hunting for such a long time. "He has eaten the grandmother, but perhaps she still can be saved. I won't shoot him," thought the huntsman. So he took a pair of scissors and cut open his belly.

He had cut only a few strokes when he saw the red cap shining through. He cut a little more, and the girl jumped out and cried, "Oh, I was so frightened! It was so dark inside the wolf's body!"

And then the grandmother came out alive as well. Then Little Red Cap fetched some large heavy stones. They filled the wolf's body with them, and when he woke up and tried to run away, the stones were so heavy that he fell down dead.

The three of them were happy. The huntsman took the wolf's pelt. The grandmother ate the cake and drank the wine that Little Red Cap had brought. And Little Red Cap thought to herself, "As long as I live, I will never leave the path and run off into the woods by myself if mother tells me not to."