

CZECH FAIRY TALES



Prague, 2025

NAKLADATELSTVÍ
PLOT

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LITTLE RED BONNET

Believe it or not, once upon a time, there lived a little girl in a cottage by the forest, known as Little Red Bonnet. A strange name, you might think, but if you saw this girl with your own eyes, you'd immediately understand how she got that nickname.

She was a girl like any other, except for one thing that set her apart at first glance – whether it was morning or evening, summer or winter, she wore a red bonnet on her head. No one could imagine her without that little bonnet, and that's why no one called her anything other than Little Red Bonnet.

Little Red Bonnet grew up quickly into a sweet and fearless girl.

One day, her mother baked a cake, even though they weren't expecting visitors at the cottage by the forest, let alone on a Sunday.

"Why did you bake a cake?" Little Red Bonnet wondered.

"Grandma is having a celebration," the mother said, placing the cake in the basket and adding a bottle of wine. "Go, Little Red Bonnet, give grandmother my best regards and see that you come back safely!"

Little Red Bonnet took the basket, but before she could step out the door, her mother stopped her.

"Little Red Bonnet," she said sternly, "you must promise me that you won't go through the forest!"

“But the forest is the shortest way!” Little Red Bonnet objected.

“It may be the shortest,” her mother agreed, “but it certainly isn’t the safest. Something could happen to a girl like you in the forest! What if you lost your way?”

Little Red Bonnet had to promise to avoid the forest, and only then did her mother let her go.

Little Red Bonnet set off along the path between the fields, picking daisies here, red poppies there, or blue cornflowers, since grandmother was having a celebration she also deserved a bouquet. She ran here and there, not paying attention, and suddenly, she didn’t even know how, she found herself at the edge of the forest. The narrow path wound between the bushes, and Little Red Bonnet felt it was inviting her to follow it.

“Grandmother lives beyond the forest,” Little Red Bonnet reasoned, “just on the other side! If I go around the forest, it will take me twice as long! I’ve already lost time...”

Little Red Bonnet forgot the promise she had made her mother and, without another thought, bounded off into the forest.

At first, it seemed that everything was perfectly fine, that nothing bad could possibly happen to Little Red Bonnet. The path really did lead to the other side of the forest, twisting merrily between the blackberry bushes, cautiously avoiding large roots and holes where one could easily fall. But as the day faded, the brambles thickened, the light grew dimmer, the path disappeared and reappeared, and poor Little Red Bonnet soon didn’t know where she had come from or where



she was going. It was then that she remembered the promise she had made to her mother. She turned to go back, but the path had disappeared. At that moment, the bushes parted, and in front of Little Red Bonnet stood a wolf.

“Hello, Little Red Bonnet,” he greeted politely with a slight smile.

Little Red Bonnet was a well-mannered child, so she knew she had to respond when someone addressed her politely.

“Hello,” she said, bowing slightly.

“What are you doing here, Little Red Bonnet,” the wolf wondered, “all alone in such a dense and dark forest?”

"I'm on the way to visit my grandmother," replied Little Red Bonnet. "She'll soon be celebrating her name day, so I'm bringing her a cake, a bottle of wine, and a bouquet."

"And where does your grandmother live?" the wolf inquired.

"Right beyond the forest, in a cottage with a thatched roof, next to three large linden trees," said Little Red Bonnet, gradually becoming less afraid. At least she had someone to talk to.

"Oh, I know," nodded the wolf, "three large linden trees..." and just as he appeared, he disappeared.

Little Red Bonnet sighed. It's a pity she lost a companion. Together, finding the way out of the forest would surely be easier.

However, the wolf knew his way around the forest. A hop and a skip, once to the right and twice to the left, and he was already at the cottage with the thatched roof, over which three sprawling linden trees cast long shadows. He raised his paw and knocked three times.

"Who's there?" came a voice from the inside.

"It's me, grandmother! Your Little Red Bonnet," croaked the wolf, trying to mimic Little Red Bonnet's voice. "I've brought you something tasty for your name day and a bottle of wine to go with it!"

"Is that really you, Little Red Bonnet?" the voice from the cottage rejoiced. "Come in, my dear, the door is open!"

The wolf pushed the door open, leaped into the room, opened his jaws, and swallowed the grandmother whole. He



then tied her bonnet on his head, lay down in the bed, and waited.

Little Red Bonnet finally found her way out of the forest and happily ran toward the cottage. She stood before the door and knocked three times.

"Who's there?" came a voice from inside.

"It's me, grandmother! Your Little Red Bonnet," the girl exclaimed. "I've brought you a cake, a bottle of wine, and a bouquet I picked myself for your name day!"

"Is that really you, Little Red Bonnet?" the voice from the cottage rejoiced. "Come in, my dear, the door is open!"

Little Red Bonnet pushed the door open and stepped into the room.

“Grandmother,” she wondered as she stood on the threshold, “what big ears you have!”

“The better to hear you with!” mumbled the wolf from under the covers.

Little Red Bonnet stepped further into the room and, completely puzzled, exclaimed:

“Grandmother, what big eyes you have!”

“The better to see you with!” muttered the wolf, pulling the bonnet deeper over his eyes.

Little Red Bonnet approached the bed and suddenly noticed the enormous animal mouth.

“Grandmother,” she gasped, “what a big mouth you have!”

“The better to eat you with!” cried the wolf eagerly as he leaped from the bed and swallowed Little Red Bonnet along with the basket containing the cake, the bottle of wine, and the bouquet for her grandmother. Then he lay back down in the bed and contentedly fell asleep.

Toward evening, a gamekeeper passed by the cottage. He walked this way every day when returning home from the forest, but he had never heard the grandmother snore so loudly. Surprised, he stopped and listened. Was that really the grandmother? No, the gamekeeper couldn’t believe it and decided to take a look inside.

The door was ajar, so the brave gamekeeper walked straight into the little room. How astonished he was to see, instead of the grandmother, a wolf in her nightcap with a huge belly

lying in bed! The wolf was snoring so loudly that the entire cottage shook. Without hesitation, the gamekeeper drew his knife and slit the wolf’s belly open.

First, Little Red Bonnet jumped out; then, the grandmother scrambled out; and last, the basket with the cake, bottle of wine, and bouquet of wildflowers fell out.

The gamekeeper filled the wolf’s belly with stones, the grandmother sewed it up, and together they threw the wolf into the well. Then they all sat at the table; the grandmother opened the bottle of wine, sliced the cake, and kindly thanked the gamekeeper.

And Little Red Bonnet? From that time on, she knew very well that when one makes a promise, one should keep it.

THE GINGERBREAD HOUSE

In the world, there are those who have plenty, and those who don't have enough. That's just the way it is. Hansel and Gretel were siblings from a poor family. They lived in a small village called Lhota, and their parents were very troubled. Often they did not have even a piece of bread to give to their children. One day, at his wits' end, the father had a desperate thought.

"Our children are hungry, and we have nothing to give them to eat tomorrow," he said, turning sadly to his wife.

"I know dear," sighed the mother, "but what can we do? You are out of work, we sold the goat, and our last chicken was taken by the fox."

"If our children are to find happiness," the father pondered, "then it must be somewhere far from here..."

"But where?" exclaimed the mother. "If I knew where to look, I would have set out in search of it long ago!"

The father took the mother's hand, lowering his head.

"If I were to take them somewhere far away, so they couldn't find their way back home to this poverty, perhaps happiness would find them on its own." He fell silent again. Overcome with despair, he could speak no more.

The next day, as soon as dawn broke, the father took the children into the forest to pick strawberries. Hansel filled his jug to the brim, but when he looked around, their father was nowhere to be seen.

"Where is our father?" he asked Gretel.

"I don't know, Hansel," Gretel replied, continuing to gather the sweet red fruits, though her jug was barely half full. So she kept picking, venturing deeper and deeper into the forest.

Hansel stayed close to her, constantly looking around, hoping to catch a glimpse of their father. Not paying attention, the strawberries from his jug spilled onto the ground.

When Gretel's jug was full, she noticed that Hansel had lost all his strawberries, so she began collecting more to fill his jug. But Hansel kept looking around more and more, losing even the berries Gretel had gathered, and this went on until it was completely dark.

"Hansel, I'm scared," Gretel started to weep.

"Don't worry, Gretel," Hansel said. "I'll climb up a tree and look around to see if I can find which way we should go."

The children headed towards a tall tree that towered above all the others. Gretel sat down under the tree, while Hansel climbed into its crown.

"Do you see anything, Hansel?" Gretel called up.

"Just a single light," Hansel called down.

"And where is that light?" Gretel asked excitedly.

"Not far from here, in a small clearing, just a few steps away," Hansel laughed as he climbed down.

The children decided to head in that direction. They would find the clearing, surely a cottage where the light Hansel had seen from the treetop was



shining, and ask for shelter. They would spend the night there, and in the morning, surely find their way home.

As they planned, so it happened. The clearing was farther than a few steps, as it had seemed to Hansel from that height, but eventually, the children happily arrived at the cottage.

"Hansel!" Gretel exclaimed, "do you see that cottage?"

"It's made entirely of gingerbread!" the boy marveled. At that moment, he realized how very hungry he was. After all, he'd only eaten a few strawberries all day! "You know what, Gretel," Hansel suggested, "I'll climb up to the chimney, break off a piece of gingerbread, and we'll both eat our fill."

"What if someone hears you?" Gretel worried.

"I'll be as quiet as a mouse," Hansel assured her as he began to scramble onto the roof. He settled behind the chimney, broke off a piece of gingerbread, and tossed it to Gretel.

Inside, the old woman said to the old man:

"If my senses aren't deceiving me, old man, something's happening outside! Go and see if someone's nibbling at our gingerbread!"

The old man stuck his head out the door.

"Who's nibbling at my gingerbread?"

Hansel, hiding behind the chimney, quickly replied:

"It's nothing, grandpa, just the little breeze!"

The old man was reassured, returned inside the cottage, and settled back by the stove. But soon, the strange scratching and cracking sounds resumed, so the old woman said again:

"If my senses aren't deceiving me, old man, something's really happening outside! Let's both go and have a look."



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