

Big Blue Riding Hood

Okay. Many of you may have heard of me. I am known as “Little Red Riding Hood.” My tale has become so famous and the retellings so extensive that I doubt you’d meet a child over the age of seven who hasn’t heard some version of it. For the rare few who might have missed it, here’s a quick rehash: I went to go visit my sickly grandmother, who lives in the woods, with a basket of goodies. I run into the “Big Bad Wolf” and manage to escape. Then the wolf runs ahead and does something to my poor grandmother—no one agrees on exactly what, the ideas range from ones safe to tell small children to grisly horrors that would give grown men goose bumps—and somehow ends up in her clothes pretending to be my grandmother. The wolf tries to trick me into believing he’s my grandmother so he can eat me. Then the details grow fuzzy again on the ending, and no version is quite the same.

Anyway, I’m here to reveal my true tale—though it is not even mine, not really. I’ll be the first to sing praises of the true unsung hero. He’s the one whom this story is really about. Not me, but my older twin brother—Blue. This is the truth of what happened.



Once upon a time...no. A story like this shall not start like *that*. That is how one starts a fairy tale—and this is no fairy tale.

Many years ago, there was a pair twins born. The first was a strong, but quiet boy. He retained this quiet wariness his entire life. The younger, a girl, was small yet loud, who was full of wonder and curiosity. She constantly would wander into trouble, only to be saved by her cautious brother time and time again.

Their parents wrapped them in large cloths that became their...baby blankets, you could call them. The boy’s was as dark a blue as the sky, just before the first rays of dawn. As for the girl’s, hers was a deep crimson as spilt blood. Now, these parents of theirs weren’t what one would call creative, and named their children after the color of the blankets cloths—the boy, Blue, and his sister, Red.

These fabrics of theirs’ were cherished, and so, when the twins were in their seventh spring, their mother made them into cloaks. She made them as large as she could, so that they might have room to grow.

As they grew older, they loved to wander the woods on the eastern edge of town. Many of the townspeople feared the woods—it was said a witch lived deep within the woods. But, alas, these rumors did not deter this duo.

Whenever they possibly could—no matter the season—they explored the forest, excepting when one was ill or Mother Nature too harsh. They always wore their beloved cloaks whenever they went—their mother told them of how they were a protection. Dark blue was a

color that warded off evil, and red, preferably crimson, was a talisman to prevent magic from being used against the wearer.

One day, they decided to have a picnic in the forest. Red helped her mother prepare a basket full of goodies for the two the night before. When the two twelve-year-olds woke up with the sun the next morning, they got ready, kissed their mother goodbye, and setting off. Blue, being much larger and stronger than Red, offered to carry the basket, but Red, stubborn as ever, insisted that she could handle it. So he let her have her way after a few failed attempts of convincing her.

That day, they ended up going deeper into the woods than they had ever gone before—they were in search of the perfect place for their picnic. Eventually, they found a lovely little meadow-clearing near a clear, petite brook.

They walked to a grassy patch and settled down; they spread the blanket on the ground, pulled out the yummy food Red had prepared, and then situated themselves comfortably. They began to talk about random things for a bit. After a short while, a girl, about their age, perhaps a year younger, came into the clearing, walking timidly towards them from behind.

"Uh...umm...hello!" She squeaked. Both Blue and Red jumped at the sudden voice. When they turned around, Red, the social butterfly she was, spoke first.

"Oh! Hello! Who might you be?" Red grinned merrily, "I'm Red, and this is my, brother Blue!"

"I'm Misty." The girl said shyly, "Where did you come from? How did you find this place?"

"Well, we walked a long time, going deeper into the woods than we usually do, and when we came upon this pleasant little meadow, we thought it would be the perfect place for our picnic!" Red said cheerily, "Why don't you join us? We've got more than enough food. It'll be nice to have the company of a third person."

The girl hesitated before sitting down next to the "colorfully named" twins. They shared their food with her and conversed pleasantly. Well, Red and Misty did—Blue wasn't much of a talker. Red told the girl about how she and her brother often explored the woods and how they had been named after the color of the very cloaks they were wearing. Misty told the two about how she lived with her grandmother a little ways off, and—after making the two swear to secrecy—about how her grandmother, was, in fact, a wizardess, and she was learning the magical art from her.

This made Red really excited—she had always loved the tales and lore of magic and magical creatures. She asked Misty countless questions about everything magical, such as, "Which magical creatures from the stories are actually real?" "What's the easiest kind of magic to do?" "Can I learn it too?" Misty answered her bombardment of questions as best she could. After a while, Misty offered to take Red to her grandmother if she wanted to know more, for her grandmother knew much more than she. Red eagerly agreed. So they packed up what was left of the picnic—the stubborn Red still refused to let Blue carry the basket.

As they followed Misty, Blue whispered a few cautionary words to Red, but she just shrugged them off. Red was far too excited to heed any words of caution at the moment. Alas, it would later prove to have served her well to listen. They followed their new friend for about half an hour, Misty telling Red of the amazing things her grandmother could do all the while—Red was fascinated. She also told Red about how many people hated her grandmother all because of all those horrid rumors of a “witch.” Misty clearly explained that while witches were indeed evil, wizardesses were not, and her grandmother was a wizardess, *not* a witch.

As they neared the place where Misty said the small cottage was, they heard rage-filled shouts, causing Misty to start trembling. She dashed forward, leaving the twins to scramble after her. They found her frozen, absolutely terrified, looking at a group of about fifteen or so men who were surrounding a cottage and banging on it with farming tools while yelling.

“We know you’re in there, witch!”

“Abomination!”

“Come out and accept your fate!”

“Terror!”

“You’re a danger to humanity!”

And so forth. One cry, though, was easily heard above the rest:

“RETURN MY DAUGHTER, YOU DAMNED SOUL!” one Man roared. (Afterwards, Misty explained that the man was her father, whom she had run away from because he was abusive. He was the reason she was so terrified then).

“We have to help!” Red cried. She tried to dart forwards, but was held back by Blue.

“U-uh...um...I might know a spell that m-might work...” Misty’s voice was full of fear, “at least, I th-think I remember all the wo-word-ds...”

“Use it!” Red was too determined to be stopped now, “We have to save your grandmother!”

Misty began to chant, “Projician super te famen et esuriem, tantum dico tibi, opto ut prosit tibi fist lupus tueri et nox ut ad officium tuum quondum original modis fit?” Even if it sounded like a question, a stream of light shot towards Red, but it reflected off of her (her cloak warded of magic, remember?) and it was directed towards the nearest living thing. Blue. It enveloped him, and the girls could no longer see him. A minute later the glow disappeared all at once. In place of Blue was a wolf with dark blue fur. The same dark blue that had been the color of Blue's cloak. It was the largest wolf ever seen, almost twice the size of a normal wolf.

Blue stared at them, dazed, unsure of why the two girls had such shocked faces. He opened his mouth as if to speak, but all that came out of his muzzle was a soft growl that quickly turned to a whine. Blue seemed as surprised as the girls. He turned in a circle, as if trying to see himself. Then he sat. Just sat. Wide eyes and blank face, he sat. He blinked.

B-blue...? Is that you?" Red approached him and wrapped her arms around his neck. The wolf shook his head like a human trying to shake off sleep when they're up at five in the morning. He stood suddenly, almost knocking his sister to the ground.

Misty was frenetic, "Oh Blue! I'm so so so so sorry! I think I might have mixed up a few of the words! The spell was supposed to make one stronger, not transform them into a wolf!" The poor girl was close to tears.

Blue stiffened for an instant and just as suddenly relaxed. He gently shook off Red and took off in the direction of the mob. He bounded towards the cottage and took a flying leap over the men. Twisting in the air, he landed in the ground with a skid. His pose was threatening and the growl he released menacing. The men froze as Blue let out a long, bone-chilling howl that rang through the woods.

Next came Red. She walked slowly and confidently through a gap between the men, her crimson cloak fluttering majestically behind her. With a cold look she faced the men. Blue cringed internally at her expression. It was her horror story face—the one she only wore when she was about to weave a false tale of fear. Most people didn't realize how good of a storyteller she was—but since none of these men knew that, it was an advantage in this case. None of them would know that the tale she told was anything but true.

She stood regally next to Blue and eyed the men. When she began to speak, her tone was as cold and cruel as the ice she formed that castle of the Snow Queen, "You all have angered the nature spirit of this wood. You have disturbed our human gatekeeper. Without her, you'd all be living in terror. She keeps the demonic forces that reside in the deepest, darkest places of the wood at bay and from rampaging among men. You have gone so far as to awaken the guardian," She gestured to Blue, "and now you *all* must pay the price." The way the slow grin appeared on her face caused a look of false insanity to enter her eyes (not that they could tell the difference.) Blue took this as a sign and lunged towards the nearest man.

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After the action died down—meaning Blue had managed chased off all the men—an elderly but strong lady came hobbling out of the house. Misty ran to her and embraced her, sobbing. When she calmed down, she told her grandmother of how she somehow messed up her spell.

Her grandmother sighed and had Misty repeat the words she had used. The grandmother explained how her granddaughter had used the word "lupus" instead of "vis eorem est." "Wolf" instead of "strength." The way she phrased the spell made it worse—she was vague and didn't use clear limitations—she didn't even insert a way to reverse it—and the way cast it was sloppy and amateurish. If magic doesn't have clear boundaries when a spell is cast, it becomes unpredictable and dangerous, becoming extremely hard to undo.

The grandmother said that if this weren't taken care of it would cause problems. She told Red that with the current situation there was only one way to solve it—to erase the memories of him from everyone he knew, for his and their sake. She wouldn't make him forget who he was, for that is too cruel, but he wouldn't be able to go home.

Before the melancholy Red left, the grandmother made her promise that she'd take off her cloak before bed, so the spell would work on her too. That way she wouldn't have to suffer. Reluctantly, she consented, giving one last guiltful look and a kiss between the eyes to her beloved brother. Misty led her to a part of the forest she knew, but she took her time getting home. When she eventually did return, she snuck into the sleeping home and went to bed.

She never took her cloak off.



I am the only one who's never forgotten Blue. How could I let myself when it was my hastiness and rushing into danger—beyond my capacity of solving—that was at fault for what ended up happening? He always protected and watched over me, always cared for me, was always willing to listen to me talk about stupid, random things for hours on end, his patience never waning. And how do I repay him? By being impatient and reckless and causing him to have to be erased from the memories of everyone. He saved me that day. He saved me. And I sentenced him to a miserable, lonely existence.

I haven't ever forgotten to wear my cloak since that day, for fear of someone erasing my memories of Blue, and that's why everyone began to call me "Little Red Riding Hood." For the stories those men spread of that day were not erased, the true story never told—until now. Until now.

I've searched endlessly since that day, starting with the woods. The next day when I made my way back to where the cottage was, it was no longer there. The only thing I found was a message written in the dirt. "SORRY." Misty probably left it. She must have known I wouldn't take off my cloak. Soon it became clear the Blue had left as well, going as far away as he could to distance himself, probably to try and protect me again.

It's been four years since then, since that awful day that began so perfectly.

But I'm close. I'm so, so close. I know it, I feel it in my soul, and I feel how I'm drawing ever closer. I'll find him before our next birthday—our sixteenth. I know I will.

This I swear, Blue—I will find you. I swear it on existence itself. Before the summer is done I *will* find you.