



# Little Red Riding Hood and The Kindle Virus

Once upon a time, there lived a little girl who was given a Kindle for Christmas. She was very pleased with her Kindle and promptly downloaded all her favourite stories to read.

Unfortunately, her Kindle became infected with a virus....



Once upon a(nother) time, Red Riding Hood was setting off to visit her Granny. She'd never been to the woods before, and her parents hadn't been near

it in over a year. Frankly, if Granny hadn't been in the habit of visiting them, they'd never have seen her at all. Red watched her mother prepare a basket of goodies.

"Am I taking anything for the dogs?" she asked her mother.

"Granny doesn't have dogs, silly."

Red swung her legs and pondered this.

"I thought Daddy said I should go and be 'specially nice to Granny as she was getting on a bit and he was sure she had a dog or two stashed away."

Her mother opened her mouth to correct her and thought better of it. The set of her jaw suggested she and Red's father would be Having Words later though.

"You must have misheard. Anyway, remember the directions - when you reach the signpost, go left and follow the path through the woods. Granny's cottage is in a clearing all on its own. You can't miss it. And watch out for wolves, because they're cunning and sometimes pretend to be old ladies."

Red considered this carefully.

"So they'll ask me if I've got a boyfriend and wink at me a lot?"

"Well, no... but that's not all old ladies do, is it?"

"No," agreed Red, who had a literal turn of mind. "They're also keen on bringing back hanging. Granny says if every second lamp-post was decorated with a young offender, we'd have a lot less trouble. And she says young people should be birched more often."

Her mother rolled her eyes.

"Oh, I'm sure she didn't mean it."

"Yes she did. She said weekly would be about right."

Her mother felt the conversation was somehow getting away from her.

"Look, just watch out for wolves, all right? Big ears, big teeth. You can't mistake them. If you meet one, throw a pie to distract it while you run away and climb a tree."

Red nodded politely. Climbing a tree was all very well, but she'd rather put her faith in the hatchet she'd tucked into her basket when her mother's back was turned.



So here we have Little Red Riding Hood, sent out by her mother into the wolf-

infested forest. With her basket full of freshly-baked, aromatic goodies. And her bright red, conspicuous cloak.

Is her mother trying to tell her something? Just a thought.



Red skipped merrily along for half an hour or so until she got self-conscious about it and began to walk like a normal person. She arrived at the signpost that would guide her through the woods, dutifully chose the left hand path and trotted off.

Five minutes' walk brought her to a clearing, where, just as expected, was a little cottage. She knocked on the door and turned to scan the woods for sudden wolfishness. She heard the door open and turned back. On the basis that anyone might be a wolf in disguise, she'd prepared a set speech.

"My, what big..." There was no-one there.

"Down here, miss."

Red looked down. And farther down. And came face-to-kneecap with a dwarf.

"You're a dwarf," she pointed out.

"People can always tell. It's the height that gives it away, isn't it?" The dwarf perked up suddenly. "So .... I expect you'll have been abandoned in the woods after your wicked step-mother's tried to have you killed and you'll be looking for a safe place to clean. Stay! I meant stay," he amended hurriedly. "Cooking and cleaning would be entirely optional."

"Ummmm, actually I thought this was my Granny's cottage. I think I've gone the wrong way."

The dwarf deflated.

"I don't suppose you'd like to come in for a quick hi-ho, would you?"

"Is that an innuendo?" asked Red suspiciously.

"Er, no... it's a song."

"Oh. All the same, I'd better not. My mother told me not to dawdle. Sorry."

She retraced her footsteps back to the signpost and found she'd come back down the *right* hand path. *How odd*, she thought. She set herself emphatically on the left hand path and trotted off again.

Another clearing. Another cottage. Another knock. The door swung open and a massive furry creature in an apron and mob-cap bared its huge fangs at Red. *Gotcha*, she thought, groping for the hatchet.

"My what big teeth you have!" she managed, before a tea-towel flicked her painfully round the ear.

"Vot you vant now? Stealer of porridge!! You complain, yess, you complain zat I do not know how to make good porridge, but still you eat it, oh yess. And zen the beds - too hard, too soft. Vot are you? Mattress tester? Go away!!" The



mother bear slammed the door, leaving Red dumbstruck on the verandah.

Her ear throbbing painfully, Red ran back to the signpost and discovered once again that she wasn't on the left hand path. She prodded the signpost suspiciously and then set off firmly to the left.

Another cottage. Very respectable, very .... solid. It was flanked by a pile of kindling on one side and some dishevelled straw on the other. Red knocked and waited. The door opened.

"My, what big ears ... you ... have..." she tailed off.

The pig reached up to check his ears. "I have not. They are small and pink and cute. And you are very rude."

"I'm sorry! I thought you might be a wolf..."

There was a squeal, the door slammed and the bolts shot home. She called through the door.

"I didn't say there *was* a wolf. I said I thought *you* might be a wolf."

The bolts scraped back and the door opened half an inch.

"You are very thoughtless young person," panted the pig. "My brothers and I, we live in fear of the big, bad wolf. Already he has blown down their houses and now they live with me."

"Blown up?"

"No, blown down, with the huffing and the puffing."

"He huffs and puffs...?"

"Yaaas, and he blew their houses down. But me, I built mine with bricks and mortar, so now my brothers, they live here with me. I charge very reasonable rent."

There was a derisory snort from within.

"I've come to the wrong address again, I'm sorry," said Red. "I just don't understand it. I'd better go. Umm... I hope the wolf doesn't come back to bother you."

"Oh, I am very forward-thinking pig," he announced, producing a 12-bore shotgun from behind his back. "Big, bad wolf, he get a surprise next time, yaaas."

Back at the signpost, Red realised she'd gone wrong again. She shook her head as if to clear it, took a deep breath, and marched off once more.

The cottage she encountered this time was very jolly. And surprisingly ... fragrant. She drew her finger down the door and it came away with crumbs on it. *Why*, she thought,

*it's a biscuit!* She knocked gingerly (it was a ginger biscuit) and waited till the door swung open.

"My, what big teeth... you... haven't



got... " Red stared, aghast, at a dental nightmare.

"Ja, dey rotted," explained Hansel on a wave of halitosis. "Too many sweets."

Gretel appeared beside him and treated Red to the same decayed grin as her brother.

"Sweets?" enquired Red.

"Ja," said Gretel, gesturing at the cottage. "Is all made of sweets. Glass, valls, vood, all sweets."

"How odd."

"Ja. Used to be old lady lived here, but ve cooked her."

"You cooked her?"

"Ja," nodded Hansel happily. "In oven."

Red sat down hard on the doorstep, or at least she tried to, but being gingerbread, she rather sank into it. She's dead, she thought. Granny's dead, and we can't even have a funeral because she's already been cremated. She started to cry.

"Vy you crynk?" asked Gretel.

"I think you cooked my grandmother," sniffed Red.

Gretel gave this some consideration. "Your grandmudder, she good person or nasty vitchy person?"

Red thought about it. She was a bit dubious about the hanging and the birching, but overall....

"Good," she decided.

"Ach no, ve cook nasty vitchy person. She vant to eat us. Vas not your grandmudder."

Red was so relieved she broke off a piece of the doorstep and ate it. Gretel patted her shoulder.

"You vant to stay und haff dinner? Ve are haffing an occasional table."

"Thank you, but I shouldn't. My mother says the Tooth Fairy will come and knock all my teeth out if I eat too many sweets."

Hansel and Gretel exchanged a glance.

"Your mudder, she reads der Grimm fairytales, ja?"

"They're pretty grim, yes."

Poor little Red Riding Hood. Here she is, back at the signpost again. She can't get to where she wants because the nasty virus keeps hijacking her search.

What she needs is a tool to combat the virus.....

Red took the axe out of her basket and, swinging it casually, stepped up close to the signpost. Drawing her finger down the wood, she murmured "I could still get some use out of this hatchet today, you know...."

Yes, that one should do the trick.

Heading firmly down the left hand path once more, she found herself outside yet another cottage. With all these cottages in the woods, she thought, it's a wonder there's room to swing a wolf.

This cottage was double-glazed and boasted an enormous satellite dish on the roof. Red banged on the door.

"Ye-e-es?" said a quavery voice from inside.

"Is that you, Granny?" asked Red dubiously.

There was a thoughtful silence on the other side of the door, then...



"Yourr Grranny, she has big earrs, yes?" The voice now had definite overtones of a growl.

"I don't think so."

"Not even the betterr to hearr you with?"

Red thought about this.

"No-oo, Granny always says she can't be doing with listening to people at her time of life."

"Oh." The voice tried another tack. "I expect you have brrought lots of food, little girrl."

"Yes, and a very sharp axe."

The thoughtful silence stretched a little longer this time, before the voice reached a decision.

"Ah... yourr grranny is asleep. I am just a friiendly wolf who has drropped in forr a bite."

"A bite of whom?"

"Ha, ha. Verry drroll."

"I think," said Red carefully, "that you should drop in on someone more hospitable. I hear the Three Little Pigs are having a party...."

"Arre they rreally?"

"Oh yes. I understand it'll be a real blast too."

"Hmmm. A rreal blast, you say?"

*Especially if the pig has time to relax*, thought Red.

"I should trot along down there, if I were you. It sounds like fun."

"Thank you little girrl. Errr... I'm coming out now, if you and yourr axe could look the otherr way....?"

Red stepped aside. A huge wolf sidled out, dressed fetchingly in a pink frilly nightgown with matching bed-jacket. He held out a furry leg for her inspection. "What do you think? Maybe I should change forr the party?"

"Oh no," trilled Red. "Pink is really you."

The wolf preened itself and padded off into the woods. Red went into the cottage and closed the door. Putting her basket on the table, she called out:

"Granny? Are you awake? It's me, Red. Hello-oo?"

Bedsprings creaked, there was a noise like "Wzzt?" and then after some shuffling, Granny appeared. Red ran across and kissed her.

"Look, Mummy's made some pies and things for you. And her special Chicken Balti. I brought them here all on my own," she said proudly. "Except I got lost quite a lot," she added.

"Is that so?" Granny unpacked the carton of Balti. "Hmmm. Curryin' favour, I see. Well well, sit down child, while I pop the kettle on."

Red sat down and looked around. "My, what a big TV you have!" It took up nearly one whole wall.

"All the better to see. I couldn't be doin' with squintin' at that little portable anymore."

"And what big speakers you have!" "All the better to hear. Bang and Olufsen. If I turn 'em right up to the max, the moles vibrate clear up out of the ground," she laughed.

Red peered closer at Granny. "Gosh, what shiny white teeth you have Granny."

"Like 'em?" Granny bared her teeth. "Porcelain crowns. I'm off on a cruise soon and I want to look me best."

The kettle whistled, and so did Red. "This must have cost a lot."

"Oh, it did, it did. Tell me sweetheart, d'you like to see your Mummy and Daddy laugh?"

"Oh yes," said Red fervently. "Well then, you tell 'em your Granny

taught you a funny joke today. 'S called '*spendin' their inheritance*'."

"It's a very *short* joke," observed Red. "They'll laugh, will they?"

"Till they cry, I reckon." Granny grinned wickedly as she poured the tea. "You didn't see a wolf anywhere around, did you? Scruffy beggar, likely wearin' some of my clothes? Only *One Man and His Dog's* on in five minutes and he never misses it. Can't see the attraction pers'nally, but he seems to get a kick out of watchin' sheep run around."

Red bit her lip.

"He really was a friend then?"

"Mmmmf," nodded Granny, through a mouthful of cake. She swallowed. "Known him years."

"Oh Granny..." began Red tearfully, when the door swung open and the wolf padded in. His pink bed-jacket was singed and he'd lost the tip of one ear. He paused for a moment, then sat down next to Red.

"Ah yes," he growled, "the little girrl with the drroll sense of humourr." He reached out to pick up a mutton pie and caught sight of his sleeve. "This bed-jacket's rruined you know."

"Look, I'm really sorry..." began Red, but he waved her apology away and continued lugubriously.

"Oh, it doesn't rreally mattern. I was getting tired of the Big Bad Wolf thing anyway. One day it's all huffing and puffing, the next you've lost yourr puff and it's a shorrt step to being a wolfskin rrug. It's time forr a carreerr change"

"Doin' what?" asked Granny. "Footballerr! Got ourr own team!"

"Oh for pity's sake," said Granny. "Wolves is a nickname, not a description. Anyway, I've seen you with a ball. You've got four left feet."

"Then I'll be a rock starr. Can't say a wolf's nevvrr been a rrock starr. He flung his head back. "*Get yourr motorr rrrunning... ow-ow-ow-arrrrroooooo!!!*"

"STEPPENWOLF WAS NOT A WOLF!!" yelled Granny over the din.

The wolf lapsed into a sulky silence. Granny watched him for a moment and then sighed. "Oh, what the heck. Rock music's mostly hair and howlin' anyway. Go for it."

And so they all lived happy ever after....

....Granny eloped with the purser on her cruise ship.

....Hansel and Gretel ate themselves out of house and home and moved in with the dwarf. It was hard lines on him, but then six out of seven dwarves aren't Happy.

....The third little pig snapped up the gingerbread cottage site before the crumbs had even settled and got planning permission for sixteen starter homes.

.... And sometimes at night, in a shaft of moonlight, the wolf could be spotted preparing for his big break on *Britain's Got Talons (and Claws)* .....

Borrn to be wi-i-iii-ild... ow-ow-ow-ooooo!!!

# The End

