

© 2007. Sample. Anne Phelan. **The Red Variations:** *Four Versions of Red Riding Hood*. For scripts and performance rights, contact anne@annephelan.com.

Characters:

RED	initially, a five year old girl; then a nine year old girl; a teenager; and finally in her late 20s
MOTHER	RED's mother
GRANDMA	RED's grandmother
WOLF	
HUNTSMAN	
CAT	GRANDMA's Cat, a cat hand puppet

This play is written for two women and two men. The same actress plays MOTHER and GRANDMA. The HUNTSMAN also plays the CAT.

This play tells four versions of the story, based primarily on three sources. The first version, "Little Red Riding Hood," is from Britain, ca. 1729. The second version is "*Rotkäppchen*" ("Little Red Cap"), from the first edition of Wilhelm and Jakob Grimms' *Kinder-und Hausmärchen*, 1812. The third version is an 18th century French folktale. The fourth is original.

The stage is divided into three playing areas of progressively larger size: the smallest is Red's House; the middle-sized one is the Woods, and the largest is Grandma's house. Depending upon technical capabilities, the lighting of the playing areas should shift, so that by the end of the play, Red's House has vanished, having been "gobbled up" by Grandma's house.

In place of a bell sound, a ratchet or an alarm clock could be used.

This play was produced by the Gene Frankel Theatre as part of the Femme-tastic Festival in March 2007. It was directed by Melissa Crespo. A staged reading of the play was presented at the Looking Glass Theatre Lab on May 21, 2003, directed by Julie Fei-Fan Balzer. A reading of the same version of the play was directed by Donya Washington for the Glasslight Theatre Co. at Where Eagles Dare in October 2003. A workshop of a ten-minute version of the play was performed May 20-21, 2002 as part of "The Fairy Tale Project" by the Playwrights and Directors Lab (Julie Fei-Fan Balzer, Director) at The Looking Glass Theatre. It was directed by Tamara Fisch, and the cast was Ilene Bergelson, Jeff Broitman, Desirée Burch, and Jacob Grigolia-Rosenbaum.

(The stage is empty. A bell rings. RED, five years old, and HER MOTHER enter)

MOTHER:

(Ties RED's ridinghood under HER chin)

Where are you going, young Red Ridinghood?

RED:

To Grandmamma's house.

MOTHER:

(Shaking HER finger at RED)

And shall you keep to the path?

RED:

Yes, Mamma.

(MOTHER hands HER a basket)

What did you put in the basket?

MOTHER:

Before you awoke, I made a custard. If you hadn't been such a slug-abed, you might have helped me.

(RED hangs HER head)

And there's some fresh butter from Flossie the cow.

RED:

The best butter!

MOTHER:

I hear tell that Grandmamma has lumbago, so she needs nourishment to get well and strong.

RED:

What does lumbago mean, Mamma?

MOTHER:

Her back is sore.

RED:

I know that Grandmamma loves me, because she made me this beautiful ridinghood.

MOTHER:

All that matters is that God loves you. Did you remember to say your morning prayers?

RED:

Yes, Mamma.

MOTHER:

You know that God cries when you don't say your prayers.

RED:

I don't want to make God cry.

MOTHER:

If you don't say your prayers before bed, the Devil will come in the night and snatch away your soul. He'll take you to Hell with him, and you'll burn in the fires of eternal damnation. Just when you think you can bear the flames, he'll stab you with his pitchfork. Until the end of time. Did you say your prayers last night?

RED:

(Terrified)

Yes, Mamma.

MOTHER:

(Pats RED's head)

Be a good girl. Remember, tonight is bath night.

RED:

Mayn't I bathe with my ridinghood on?

MOTHER:

You may not. It's an unseemly color, that scarlet. It's the color of heretics, of bad ... women.

RED:

Why are they bad?

MOTHER:

They sin from the minute they get up in the morning until they fall into their soiled bedclothes at night. They are all damned. I have no idea what possessed Grandmamma to make such a hood for you. You oughtn't to be wearing it at all.

RED:

But I love it!

MOTHER:

It's un-Godly to love clothes. Run along, then.

(RED leaves MOTHER and goes into the woods.

MOTHER exits)

WOLF:

(Enters and sees RED)

Good morning, Miss Red Riding Hood.

RED:

(Curtseys)

Good morning, Master Wolf.

WOLF:

Why are you in such great haste? Are you late for school?

RED:

No! I'm too young to go to school. I'm going to my grandmamma's, to take her a custard and butter from our cow.

WOLF:

Whither does she dwell?

RED:

In yonder village, just beyond the mill.

(Starts walking away from HIM)

WOLF:

Let us have a contest: we each make our own way to your grandmother's dwelling, and whoever arrives first is the winner.

RED:

I agree.

(WOLF exits on HIS way to GRANDMA's house)

Look over there! A rainbow. If I can find the end of the rainbow, I can climb into the sky!

(Chases to find the end of the rainbow)

WOLF:

(Enters and crosses to GRANDMA's house. Knocks on HER door. Disguising HIS voice)

Grandmamma!

GRANDMA:

(Lying in bed under a sheet, wearing a nightgown and a night cap)

I've too many aches and pains to get out of bed.

RED:

(Can't find the end of the rainbow. SHE looks upstage)

The Smiths' canary. Got out of her cage again!

RED (CONTD.):

(Calling)

Here, Molly! Over here!

(Waves HER arms)

You'll get lost! Come back!

GRANDMA:

What did you bring me?

WOLF:

A custard. And butter from the cow.

RED:

Molly never listens!

(Gives up, and starts for GRANDMA's)

GRANDMA:

Come in, then.

WOLF:

(Enters GRANDMA's house)

Good morning, madam.

GRANDMA:

(SHE sees HIM)

Good morning, sir. Pray, excuse me. I am not dressed to receive visitors.

WOLF:

That's unfortunate, but I haven't had a bite in three days.

(Mimes eating HER, as SHE disappears under the sheet.
RED comes to GRANDMA's house)

RED:

(Knocks at the door)

Grandmamma, it's me.

WOLF:

(Leaps into bed, puts on the night cap)

Come in, dear.

RED:

(As SHE enters)

You sound funny.

WOLF:
 (Pulls the sheet up to HIS chin)
 I have a cold, dear.
 (SHE comes to the bed)

RED:
 But Mamma said you had the lumbago.

WOLF:
 It's an all-over cold. In my head and in my back.

RED:
 (Pretending to understand)
 Oh.

WOLF:
 Put the basket down.
 (RED puts the basket down)
 Get into bed, for I am chilled to the bone.
 (RED gets into bed)
 Who gets into bed still wearing all their clothes?

RED:
 It's too cold to get undressed. Grandmamma, what big arms you have!

WOLF:
 The better to embrace thee.

RED:
 (Looking at the bedclothes)
 Grandmamma, what great legs you have.

WOLF:
 The better to chase thee.

RED:
 What big ears you have!

WOLF:
 The better to hear thee!
 (Grins at HER)

RED:
 What big teeth you have!

WOLF:

The better to eat thee up!

(Mimes eating RED, as SHE disappears under the sheet)

Little girls must never talk to strangers.

Idle chat will always lead to dangers.

(HE burps. A bell rings, and the lights change. RED and GRANDMA appear as the WOLF exits. RED is now nine years old. SHE takes off HER hood and puts on a red velvet hat. GRANDMA gets into bed)

RED:

I should go, Grandma. I need to be home when Mom gets back.

GRANDMA:

(Pats HER on the head)

My best girl. You be careful going home. The Huntsman brought me firewood yesterday, and he swore there's a wolf in the district.

RED:

Don't worry. I'll be fine.

(RED kisses HER good-bye. SHE exits. GRANDMA goes to sleep. The HUNTSMAN enters the woods)

HUNTSMAN:

(Out)

I am the Huntsman. I hunt poachers, and keep them from stealing the prince's game. I hunt varmints, and keep them from eating the serfs' crops. I hunt the predators that threaten the farm animals- both the human ones and the wolves. It's a solitary life. All I have for company is song. Otherwise, I'd be so lonely I could die.

(Sings to HIMSELF. RED enters)

RED:

Hello, Huntsman. Did you kill anything today?

HUNTSMAN:

Nothing yet, but it's early.

RED:

I see you're wearing your new coat.

HUNTSMAN:

(Nodding)

For Sunday. Do you like it, Red Cap?

RED:

I'd like it better if it was red.

HUNTSMAN:

Be a good girl, and give me a kiss.

RED:

I don't want to.

HUNTSMAN:

Why not?

RED:

You smell like rotting flesh.

HUNTSMAN:

(Shakes HIS finger at HER)

You'll never find a husband if you're so fussy as that. You will learn, Fräulein Red Cap. There are the good, and there are the bad. The bad must be killed, or at least put in prison.

(SHE exits. He calls after HER)

Beware of that wolf!

(To the audience)

The next morning....

(The HUNTSMAN exits as RED and MOTHER enter)

MOTHER:

It's market day, and I must fly, or there'll be nothing left.

RED:

I'll take the *lebkuchen* we baked yesterday to Grandma.

MOTHER:

Now, be sure to tell her we made it with the oldest honey- the oldest is always the best.

RED:

Yes, Mom.

MOTHER:

And there's a nice bottle of *Riesling*. Now, don't run, because if you fall you'll break the bottle and Grandma will get nothing.

RED:

Yes, Mom.

MOTHER:

But don't dawdle, or the wine will get too warm. Or, God forbid, you might catch cold.

RED:

Yes, Mom.

MOTHER:

And don't be nosy. She doesn't feel well. She needs cheering up.

(Hands HER the basket)

Be careful in the woods. Don't stray from the path.

RED:

I'm not afraid.

(THEY exit, in opposite directions)

WOLF:

(Enters. Out)

I am a wolf, of noble lineage. My forebear was in Aesop's tales. Yet, the humans refuse to trust me. That huntsman's constantly looking for an evermore gruesome way to do me in. He's already slaughtered my wife and the pups! From that day forward, I vowed to have my vengeance on all mankind.

(RED enters)

A golden opportunity!

(To RED)

What's your name, little girl?

RED:

Red Cap.

WOLF:

Where are you going?

RED:

To my grandma's at Three *Blumengasse*.

WOLF:

Three *Blumengasse*? I know your grandma. How is she?

RED:

She doesn't feel well, so I'm visiting to cheer her up.

WOLF:

I'm on my way to visit a sick friend myself. I may stop by to say "*Guten tag*" to Grandma. She probably needs the company, the dear old thing. You and I are both going the same way. Let me carry your basket.

(Grabs at it)

RED:

(Holding on)

No, thank you.

WOLF:

I thought perhaps you were tired.

RED:

No, I'm not.

(Starts to walk away)

WOLF:

These are the best years of your life.

RED:

What do you mean?

WOLF:

Look at the pretty flowers. Hear the birds sing. Listen to the tinkling of a waterfall in the distance. How can you be in a hurry in such a beautiful part of the Black Forest?

RED:

Well-

WOLF:

Grandma will still be there if you take the time to smell the lilacs. She'd want you to enjoy yourself, wouldn't she?

RED:

Of course.

WOLF:

Let's play a game. Let's race to the end of that sunbeam, and whoever gets there first, wins. *Ein, zwei, drei*, go!

(RED goes tearing off into the sunbeam. To HIMSELF as HE rubs HIS chin)

To consume both generations will require cunning. But I know a shortcut!

(Tears off to GRANDMA's house)

RED:

(Looks around, and HE's gone)

That's funny, he was just here.

(Sees a bee flying around)

RED (CONTD.):

Oh, Mr. Honeybee! I'll follow you, and find your hive, and we'll have plenty of honey all the time. Grandma won't care if I'm a little late.

(Chases the bee)

GRANDMA:
(WOLF knocks on GRANDMA's front door)

Who is it?

WOLF:

Red Cap.

GRANDMA:
I'm much too *schwach* and can't get up. Come in, darling.
(WOLF rushes in, leaving the front door open)
Now, is your mother being good to you?
(WOLF sees GRANDMA and GRANDMA sees the WOLF. SHE screams)
What have you done with my Little Red Cap?
(WOLF eats HER, as before)

WOLF:

She's quite dead.

(Puts on HER cap. Jumps into bed, panting)

RED:

(Entering the house)

That's funny- Grandma left the door open.

(Shivers. SHE calls)

Grandma, it's me!

(No answer)

Something's creepy.

(Crosses to the bed, puts down the basket)

I tried to find a new beehive, but I lost the bee.

WOLF:

That's nice, dear.

RED:

The Langmacks are back from their vacation in Baden-Baden. The boys have beautiful new kites. They're flying them on the hill.

(Starting to exit)

I bet you can see them out the front window-

WOLF:

No! I mean, rest a moment first. Come and cuddle.

RED:

I'm sorry that you're sick, Grandma. Do you want me to make you some eggs?