

Girl in the Red Hood

*Little Red Riding Hood was my first love.
I felt that if I could have married Little Red Riding Hood, I should have known perfect bliss.*

Charles Dickens

But not a child...a young woman, possibly—
her hands fresh with dough and pencil shavings,
toting her wicker of sketches and healing
to an old woman who seems the essence of grandmother.

Assuredly, there are fearsome beasts in this wood.
The glamour in the thread of her blood-red cloak
has repelled the unsubtle advances of satyrs and centaurs
and sent bears and goblins scuttling away in terror.

The wolf, however, has so far proven formidable.
Slinching along at the very edge of the path,
he smiles and tosses geraniums and violets before her
trying to seduce the girl with apparent kindness.

Sometime later, her pockets stuffed full of petals,
she arrives at the old woman's cottage.
The thatched house is deserted yet filled with familiarity.
The color and sound, the hand drawn picture of her husband.

For a fleeting instant, it is all returned. A home filled with flowers.
Her brokenhearted husband clutching the hand of an old woman.
“Charles...” she says, forgetting everything for the final time.
The wolf devours her at last.



ABOUT RICHARD KING PERKINS II

Richard King Perkins II is a state-sponsored advocate for residents in long-term care facilities. He has a wife named Vickie and a daughter named Sage. His work has appeared in hundreds of publications, including *Prime Mincer*, *Sheepshead Review*, *Fox Cry*, *Prairie Winds*, *Sierra Nevada Review*, and *The Red Cedar Review*.

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