

VERTICALLY CHALLENGED RED RIDING HOOD

There was once a young person named Red Riding Hood who lived on the edge of a large forest with her mother -- and though it was a single parent household it provided a loving, supportive and nurturing environment in no way inferior to any other domestic arrangement, nor did Red Riding Hood suffer any developmental instabilities from lack of a regular father figure, nor was she in any way confused or handicapped by the male friends which her mother occasionally (and solely by her own choice, not because of any social preconceptions or lack of self esteem) would ask to stay overnight.

One day, her mother asked her to take a basket of reduced- calorie fat-free sodium-free preservative-free fiber-rich biscuits and a bottle of mineral water to her grandmother's house -- not because this was woman's work, mind you, but because the deed was generous and helped engender a feeling of community.

Furthermore, her grandmother was not sick, but rather was in full physical and mental health and completely capable of taking care of herself as a mature adult and had hired a housekeeper (or, rather, a domestic sanitation engineer) not because she was unable to do such work if she chose but only because it provided a means of assisting and liberating the local diligent but under-employed immigrant community.

So Red Riding Hood set off with her basket of reduced-calorie fat-free sodium-free preservative-free fiber-rich biscuits and bottle of mineral water through the woods to Grandmother's house. She knew that many people believed that the forest was a foreboding and dangerous place, filled with wild animals, and never set foot in it. But Red Riding Hood was confident in her budding sexuality and, furthermore, had been assured by her therapist (whom she visited only that she might be a more fulfilled person, not because she felt in any way inadequate or troubled) that she had no repressed childhood traumas, and so she was not hindered by such obvious destructive Freudian imagery.

On her way to Grandmother's house, Red Riding Hood was accosted by a Wolf, who asked her what was in her basket. Although it was clearly improper for the Wolf to take such liberties as asking such personal questions without prior permission by Red Riding Hood, she was sufficiently self-possessed that she did not feel overly threatened by his query and, rather than pursuing litigation, kindly answered "I, in order to express affection and strengthen family and community ties, am taking some reduced-calorie fat- free sodium-free preservative-free fiber-rich biscuits (which, I might add, were manufactured without any testing on or exploitation of animals and by a factory which produces no harmful byproducts or greenhouse gasses) and a bottle of mineral water to my grandmother, who is certainly fully capable of taking care of herself as a mature adult and hires a domestic Sanitation engineer only in order to liberate the diligent but under -employed immigrant community."

The Wolf said, "You know, my dear, it isn't safe for a little girl to walk through these woods alone."

Red Riding Hood replied "I am a woman, not a girl, and I find your sexist and masculine-centered remark offensive in the extreme, but I will ignore it because I am confident in my own worth as an independent and responsible human being and I recognize that your status as an outcast from society, brought about by narrow-minded traditionalism and inadequate social engineering, has caused you to develop your own offensive yet nevertheless entirely valid world-view. Now, if you will excuse me I must be on my way, not because I wish to belittle your conversation or express disinterest in your intrinsic worth as an individual but because I need to fulfill my social obligations and return home in time to meet my therapist, whom I visit only to further enhance my already more-than-adequate sense of self-worth and fulfillment."

Red Riding Hood walked along the main path. However, because his status outside traditional society had freed the Wolf from slavish adherence to the linear, Western-style thought which had characterized the builders of the road, he knew of a quicker, more intuitive route to Grandmother's house. He hurried along this route, burst into Grandmother's house and ate her -- which, though an entirely valid course of action for someone who had adopted a carnivorous lifestyle, and certainly not to be faulted as wrong or immoral by close-minded non-carnivorous observers, nevertheless represented an improper and offensive imposition of that lifestyle and perspective on Grandmother. Then, hampered neither by rigid, traditionalist notions of masculinity and femininity nor by possible Oedipean interpretations of his actions, he put on Grandmother's nightclothes and crawled into bed.

Soon, Red Riding Hood entered the cottage and said, "Grandma, I have brought you some reduced-calorie fat-free sodium-free preservative-free fiber-rich snacks (which were manufactured without animal testing or environmentally threatening procedures) to salute you in your role of wise and nurturing matriarch."

From the bed, the Wolf said softly, "Come closer, child, so that I might see you."

Red Riding Hood replied, "Oh, I forgot that you are as optically-challenged as a bat, a perfectly acceptable and tax-deductible condition.

My, Grandmother, what big eyes you have!"

"They have seem much and forgiven much, my dear."

"My, Grandmother, what a big nose you have -- only relative to

traditional aesthetics, of course, to which you have no obligation to conform and a nose which, in your own aesthetic framework, may certainly be attractive and fulfilling."

"It has smelled much and forgiven much, my dear."

"My, Grandmother, what big teeth you have..."

"Your observations do not change the fact that I am happy with my appearance, and furthermore am confident with my lifestyle choice as a carnivore, which is why I am now going to eat you, though I hope you will understand my actions arise out of no malice or dislike toward you and that any injury my behavior may cause you should in no way be taken personally, particularly as I cannot be held responsible for any action which is in any way, howsoever remotely, a result of my underprivileged childhood. Furthermore, I would be equally happy to eat you if you were a boy and only unfortunate coincidence, not any personal bias, has resulted in the fact that I happen to be eating only females today."

The Wolf sprang out of bed and grabbed Red Riding Hood who screamed, not because of alarm at the Wolf's apparent tendency toward cross-dressing, a perfectly valid and acceptable clothing option, but because of his willful invasion of her personal space and apparent intent to force his world-view upon her. Her screams were heard by a passing woodchopper-person (or, as he preferred to be called, a Natural-Fuel Technician.) When he burst into the cottage he saw the melee and tried to intervene. But as he raised his ax, Red Riding Hood and the Wolf both stopped.

"What do you think you're doing?" asked the Wolf.

The Natural-Fuel Technician blinked and tried to answer, but could not think of a reply -- but only because his underprivileged upbringing had not provided him with an adequate education, a fact which in no way undermined his intrinsic value as a human-being or compromised, in any way, his eligibility for any career, particularly academia and politics.

"What," asked Red Riding Hood "gives you the right to burst in here like a Neanderthal, trusting your weapon to do your thinking for you? Sexist!

Speciesist! How dare you assume that women and wolves can't solve their own problems without a man's help!"

When she heard Red Riding Hood's speech, Grandmother jumped out of the Wolf's mouth, grabbed the Natural-fuel Technician's ax, and cut his head off, a perfectly justifiable action, particularly since the Technician had clearly been irretrievably indoctrinated into an intolerant Euro-centric outlook.

After this ordeal, Red Riding Hood, Grandmother, and the Wolf felt a

certain commonality of purpose and mutual recognition of each other's worth. The Wolf, moved by this recent example of the deleterious effects of the Technician's attempt to impose his devaluing world-view on others, vowed (or, rather, promised, since he was in no way limited by any primitive and unsubstantiated belief in some Absolute or Divinity) not to eat any other individual without first obtaining their written consent, in triplicate, granting him the right to freely express himself in a carnivorous fashion (and, in fact, the Wolf ultimately converted to vegetarianism, convinced of its superior health benefits). The three decided to set up an alternative household, based on their feelings of mutual respect and cooperation, not to mention the tax incentives granted such associations, and they lived together in the woods happily ever after, though, of course, they were not bound by any obligation to stay "ever after," in case anyone should wish to express his/her individuality or seek fulfillment by choosing to leave, and they reserved the right to redefine "happily" at any time with reference to their own community decisions and outlook.

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