

# Transcript

Welcome to Easy Stories in English, the podcast that will take your English from OK to Good, and from Good to Great.

I am Ariel Goodbody, your host for this show. Today's story is for intermediate learners. The name of the story is *The Path of Pins and Needles*. You can find a transcript of the episode at [EasyStoriesInEnglish.com/Pins](https://EasyStoriesInEnglish.com/Pins). That's [EasyStoriesInEnglish.com/Pins](https://EasyStoriesInEnglish.com/Pins). There, you can also download the episode as a PDF.

Today's story is my own version of a classic fairy tale called The Story of the Grandmother. You might know this story as Little Red Riding Hood, although The Story of the Grandmother is the earliest version of this story that we have recorded.

The Story of the Grandmother is quite different from Little Red Riding Hood, and much darker. I heard it for the first time from a storyteller at a festival and I fell in love with it. In my opinion, this older version of the story has a much more interesting message than Little Red Riding Hood. But that doesn't mean that one version is more 'authentic' or 'true' than the other – as the storyteller at this festival said, each time someone retells a story, they make it their own.

So I had a go at adapting this fairy tale, and I have to say, my version is even darker than the original! You're probably not surprised. But I wanted to warn you: this story has suggestions of sexual violence, and a lot of blood and guts and not very nice things. If you don't like those kinds of stories, or are listening to this story with your children, please be careful!

But before we get into today's story, I'm going to try something new today where I read out some reviews that listeners have left. I thought it would be a nice way to show appreciation for the kind things you all say about the show!

So first we have a review from kaitheidiot from the United States who says: *Super Good! Soooo good for learning new words and listening to amazing stories! AMAZING!!*

Wow, Kai! That's really great feedback. But please don't call yourself an idiot! You should know that everyone who listens to *this* podcast is a genius.

And we also have a review from S Ab Baset Rahmani – I hope I'm saying that right! – also from the US, who says: *You have done great. Very nice story with professional announcement. I enjoyed very much.*

Thank you so much, S Ab Baset Rahmani! Although I have to say, I don't usually think of myself as very professional...

If you'd like me to read your message on the podcast, you can leave a positive review on Apple Podcasts. And I do mean *positive*; I'll only read the nice reviews out. So if you say anything mean, I'll ignore it! Those are just the rules, I'm afraid. I'm afraid. I'm joking. I do really want all feedback and find ways to make the podcast better, so really just be honest. Any review is appreciated.

OK, I'll just explain some words that are in today's story.

Sometimes, when you've been sitting down for a long time and you stand up, you get **pins and needles**. Pins and needles is a tingling feeling – a feeling like lots of small needles are pressing into you. You might get pins and needles because you've been sitting on your leg for too long, for example. But sometimes you just get pins and needles randomly, which can be very annoying! You have to walk funny for a while until the tingling feeling goes away.

When you don't want someone to hear or see you, you **sneak**, and the past tense is **snuck** or **sneaked**. For example, if you want to steal something from your brother's room, you might wait until he is sleeping and sneak inside. You walk very slowly and quietly, and you try to stay in the dark so that people don't see you. Thieves are usually very good at sneaking. I am very bad at sneaking—I don't know how to move quietly.

When you **tickle** someone, you touch certain parts of their body so that they laugh. If you want to tickle someone, the easiest place to go is their feet or the sides of their stomach. Parents often tickle children, or lovers might tickle each other. But a lot of people don't like being tickled because of the feeling that they can't control their laughter.

When you **stray from** something, you move away from it when you're not supposed to. For example, if you are following a path through the woods and you decide to walk into a dark area where there is no path, you're straying from the path. And straying from the path can be dangerous! But it can also be fun...

When a feeling **gets the better of you**, the feeling is so strong that you can't control yourself. For example, maybe you meet me and you see that I have a piercing in my nose. You want to know why I have a pierced nose, but maybe you think it's rude to ask, so you don't. But you keep looking at it, and eventually your curiosity gets the better of you, so you ask me why. By the way, if you're in this situation, you can just ask! Probably. I might get mad. Who knows?

Another thing that might get the better of you is hunger. For example, maybe you show up to an event and there's a big buffet, but you're not allowed to eat any food until a long boring speech is over. The speech goes on and on, and the food looks so good, so eventually your hunger gets the better of you and you start eating. This totally isn't a situation I've found myself in...

When you **wolf something down**, you eat it very quickly, like a wolf. Children often wolf down their food because they don't want to eat slowly. But if you always wolf your food down, you might get a stomach ache!

When you **sense** something, you feel it without being able to explain how. For example, maybe you sense that your friend is sad, even though they're smiling and laughing. You know them really well, so you can sense a very small change in their feelings. Or maybe you look at the sky, and even though it's sunny, you sense that it's going to rain, and indeed, a few minutes later it does.

When you **wet yourself**, you pee on yourself, you let out urine. Adults usually don't wet themselves, but young children often do when they are very excited or scared. Wetting yourself is very embarrassing and creates a mess, of course, so I don't recommend it!

Your **intestines** are the organs below your stomach. When you eat food, it goes into your stomach. Then it goes into the small intestine, and then the long intestine. The intestines digest food, they break it down into small pieces that the body can absorb. The intestines are a very important and sensitive part of our body. Sometimes, when you've eaten food that your body doesn't like, you can hear your intestines making unhappy noises.

OK, so listen and enjoy!

## The Path of Pins and Needles

Once upon a time, there was a young girl with hair as red as blood. Such hair was rare in those times, when the sun hardly rose and strong winds blew day and night. The girl was known as Red, and as a child, she was loved by all in her village. But as Red grew older, she grew bolder, and began to **sneak around** and play tricks. She was long past the age when

adults would tickle her and call her sweet names, and so her tricks were not welcomed by the villagers.

One day, Red's mother, sick of her games, sent her to visit her grandmother.

'You know the old fool lives up on that cliff where no-one can get to her easily. She thinks she'll live forever. Ha! She has a nasty cold now, and wants us to bring her bread and milk. So I'm sending you with a basket. But do not spill a drop of this milk and don't even touch this bread, understand? And if Grandmother does not finish them, then bring them back as they are. I won't have you wasting precious food.'

'Yes, Mother,' said Red, playing with her hair.

Red's mother had spent so much time telling her about the food that she forgot to explain the path. Red had travelled to Grandmother's house as a young girl, but that was back when they had a horse and cart, when the days and nights were not so dark. Now, as she walked through the forest, she felt like the trees themselves might eat her up. So she did not walk; she sneaked, hoping that it might keep her safe.

A few hours later, Red reached a crossroads, where the path split in two. She could not remember which way to go, but just as she was considering it, she heard a familiar voice.

'Ah, if it isn't our fiery little Red!'

She turned around. It was Wolf, a man who lived in the forest just outside of the village. He had long, thick hair and a beard that covered his mouth. He must've been poor, because he was as thin as a stick and had no shoes. Red had heard all kinds of whispers about Wolf, and her mother told her to stay away from him, so naturally she was curious. But Wolf was difficult to find, and every time she'd tried to talk to him, he had ignored her, as if she were a stupid child.

'Hello, Wolf,' she said. 'What a surprise to see you here. You've strayed quite far from the path.'

'Ah, but straying from the path is one of the simple pleasures in life! I simply sought some peace and quiet. And why, may I ask, have you strayed so far?'

There was a light in Wolf's eyes, the same light that shone in Red's whenever she was about to play a trick. She liked this man.

'I'm not straying at all!' she said playfully. 'I'm heading to Grandmother's house, to deliver her bread and milk, see?'

'How sweet you are,' said Wolf, but he did not smile. 'And tell me, do you know what these two paths are called?'

'I don't,' said Red, feeling slightly uncomfortable. Wolf's eyes told stories of hunger – they were all hungry in those times, when the ground froze over every winter. But he did not stare at the food, but at her.

'Why, this is the Path of Pins and that is the Path of Needles!'

He pointed to the paths and took a step closer.

'You can't walk both, or you'll get pins and needles.'

Without warning, he reached for her sides and tickled her. Red laughed so hard that she dropped her basket of food.

'Stop, s-stop!' she cried.

Wolf let her go, and his smile was wider than the seven seas. Despite the frosty air, Red felt hot.

'Both paths lead to your grandmother's house, but I must say, I have no idea which is quicker. Why don't we play a little game? We'll each take a different path and we'll see who gets there first.'

‘And what does the winner get?’ said Red suspiciously. She wanted to ask what happened to the loser, but that was the kind of question that made her mother hit her with a wooden spoon.

‘Oh, I think the best prize is always learning something new! Now, why don’t you take the Path of Pins? If I remember correctly, it’s much safer. Better for a young girl like you.’

Red, who never liked taking the safe option, said, ‘No, I think I’ll take the Path of Needles.’

‘Ah, a fiery young thing you are!’ said Wolf. ‘Wonderful. Follow the Path of Needles, I’ll take the Pins, and we’ll see who gets to Grandmother’s house first!’

So Red set off along the path. As she walked, the forest grew thicker and the trees changed to pines. Pine needles covered the ground, giving off a delicious smell but making it hard to tell where she was going. Red had to walk slowly and look carefully to make sure she didn’t stray from the path.

Worse than that, as she came closer to her grandmother’s house, there were many rocks and cliffs, and she had to climb to keep going, pulling on roots to keep her balance. While the path certainly did lead to her grandmother’s house, it was not direct at all, and it started to get dark before she could even see the house.

Meanwhile, Wolf quickly made his way along the Path of Pins. The path was named so because of the sharp rocks that made it hard to walk on, but Wolf was used to walking without shoes, and so he did not cut his feet on the rocks.

When he came to the grandmother’s house, a little fire was blowing smoke through the chimney, but otherwise all was quiet. Wolf found himself a comfortable spot between some trees and waited for night to come.

As the full moon sat fat in the sky, Red finally reached her grandmother’s house. She **knocked on the door**.

‘Grandmother? It’s Red. I’ve come to bring you food. Come and open the door.’

‘Come in, dear!’ cried a rough voice. ‘The door is open.’

Red’s grandmother sounded different to how she remembered, but it had been years since they’d last made the journey here, and the old woman was sick, after all. Red was tired and frustrated after her journey, and Wolf was nowhere to be seen. She was sure the man had played a trick on her, one of those awful jokes that adults like to play on children. After all, he had tickled her like a stupid child. Now she would have to spend the night with her sick grandmother, hungry and bored.

So when Red came in and saw a plate of meat and a cup of wine on the table, she was very pleased indeed.

‘Oh, Grandmother! Is this for me?’

‘Yes, dear,’ said the old woman, who was lying under a mountain of blankets in bed. ‘Go, eat and drink.’

The fire was almost dead, and Red thought she should go put some wood on it, but her hunger **got the better of her**. She put down the basket and sat down to eat. It had been weeks since she’d had real meat, and Mother never usually let her have wine, so she **wolfed it down**. But as she finished the food, her stomach ached a little. Hadn’t that meat tasted a little strange? And wasn’t that wine much thicker than the kind her parents drank?

Suddenly, Red felt very cold and tired, and she wanted very much to lie down.

As if reading her mind, her grandmother said, ‘Oh, my poor child! You look exhausted after your journey. I wish I could offer you a warm fire, but I’m afraid I have run out of wood. Perhaps you could burn your clothes? I have a thick traveller’s coat in the cupboard which you could wear to travel back tomorrow...’

'Mother will be furious if I burn my clothes,' said Red. 'So I think it's an excellent idea.'

Red pulled off her coat, her shirt and her trousers and threw them onto the fire. She laughed as the flames eagerly ate them up, and the room filled with warmth and light.

Now Red could see better, and she noticed that her grandmother was looking very strange. She had her hat on in bed, and the blankets covered almost her entire face, but from what she could see, the old woman was much hairier than she remembered.

As if **sensing her fear**, her grandmother said, 'Come join me in bed, child, and warm up your old grandmother. Otherwise, I fear I may not survive the night.'

'But Grandmother,' said Red. Her curiosity got the better of her; she had to know. 'What big hands you have!'

'All the better to tickle you with, my dear.'

'But Grandmother,' said Red, 'what big ears you have!'

'All the better to hear you with, my dear.'

'But Grandmother,' said Red, 'what big eyes you have!'

'All the better to see you with, my dear.'

'But Grandmother,' said Red, 'what big arms you have!'

'All the better to hug you with, my dear!'

'And Grandmother, what a big mouth you have!'

Grandmother **chuckled**. 'All the better to *kiss* you with, my dear. And I would love so much to kiss my dear sweet grandchild.'

The old woman's hand reached out and grabbed Red's leg. Red was so scared that she lost control and **wet herself**.

'Oh, Grandmother,' said Red, tears in her eyes. 'I have wet myself. P-please, let me go out and wash myself in the stream.'

'Naughty girl!' said Grandmother. 'You only want to run away, don't you? You want to leave your grandmother to *die*.'

Red's grandmother tightened her grip so that her sharp nails pressed into Red's leg.

'No!' said Red. 'I would never do that.' She felt sick. 'Please, I don't want to get into bed with –'

'Fine, but I will tie a rope around you to make sure you do not run away.'

Grandmother's grip was too tight for Red to stop her, so she waited while the old woman tied a knot around her. Then Red walked out of her house and towards the stream.

Outside, the full moon shone brightly, and she saw that it was no ordinary rope tied around her waist, but a rope of **intestines**. Red threw up in the river, but she did not wash herself. She did not have time.

Before the wolf could pull on the rope, Red untied the intestines and tied them around a pine tree. Then she ran, ran back down the Path of Pins, the rocks stabbing her feet with every step.

When the wolf realised what had happened, sunrise was approaching and it was too late. He **howled** with rage, ate the intestines and burned down the house. When the morning came, he cried and bathed in fat tears and milk.

Red arrived home in the bitter cold of morning, tears frozen to her cheeks. She had pins and needles in her feet from where the rocks had stabbed her, and that feeling would never go away. Red told her mother what had happened, but her mother did not believe her.

Still, they did not hear from Red's grandmother after that, and when they found out that the house had burned down, Red's mother said, 'What a waste! That wood could have been used to feed a nice fire, and I'm sure she had gold hidden in there.'

From that day on, Red did not play tricks on the adults as she had before. She did not sneak around, and she never strayed from the path. She did not wet herself as children do, nor did she laugh and cry, or stop to gaze at the full moon.

For Red was an adult now, and adults see only what they want to.

## **THE END**

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