

## Little Green Riding Hood

Little Green Riding Hood walked sullenly away from her house and toward the driveway. Her mother waved with a big smile from the window, knowing that she would not have to worry about the fruits, vegetables, and whole grain bread she had packed for Granny being eaten on the way. Hamburgers, deviled eggs, cheese, and other animal products that tempted her daughter so much had not been available for some time.

Soil erosion had become a serious problem because of the overgrazing that had taken place in earlier years. During the same time, the soldiers returned home for reunions which increased the birth rate. With advanced medical care, people were living longer as well. The world was fully stocked with three prodigious and enduring generations of the young, the middle aged, and the elderly.

An active subculture of vegans became politically active in response to the population and hunger crisis, forming a strong third party that eventually raised a winning presidential candidate by the name of John Grimm. President Grimm not only championed environmental conservation, but also enforced a long argued vegan solution to world hunger. The meat industry was abolished and the land was restored for only the cultivation of fruits, vegetables, and grain products. All animals were left to fend for themselves and live without interruption in Wildlife Reserves. The world was fed and animals were protected, but people had a hard time surrendering the pleasures of a rare steak or a Spanish omelet. Little Green Riding Hood was no exception; she was glad for the stability of the world, but could not deny that she missed her animal products.

Nevertheless, she climbed into her Hybrid and set off for Granny's house. There was a path in the woods her mother had told her about that, if she followed, would not allow her to trespass into a wildlife reserve.

However, driving on a long dirt path without any signs or lights to stop at caused her old Hybrid, which got its little power from the brakes, to stall out.

"Lousy car," she lamented while walking away with the basket. "I wish they didn't outlaw--Should I say a dirty word? Oh, I don't care—HUMMER!"

"Watch your language!" called a voice.

She looked down the path and saw a young man with a cow approaching her. It was none other than Jack, whose gigantic beanstalk crops had fed entire third world countries and earned him the Nobel Peace Prize. Little Green Riding Hood was impressed, but more infatuated with the presence of the cow.

“You ought to be careful where you walk,” warned Jack. “The boundaries to the wildlife reserve are very close by.”

“Say, is that a cow?” she asked, ignoring his advice. “I thought they had to be kept in their own reserve.”

“She is my *pet*. President Grimm let me keep her as a favor for my agricultural efforts.”

“If I were lucky enough to have a cow, I’d make a good hamburger, or at least get a nice class of milk.”

“*Carnivore!*” Jack cried. “How dare you stare at my pet with such eyes! I’ll have to be on my way,” he concluded with a look of disgust.

“Please,” Little Green Riding Hood pleaded. “I heard there are wolves in some of these parts!”

“If you meet them it is your own fault for treading onto their reserved land. Perhaps *you* are the predator here, wanting to eat my pet and go against the vegan way that saved us all. Lord help the Three Little Pigs if they come across you!”

With that he left her feeling a little guilty. She continued on the path, but soon strayed to follow a trail of Taco Bell beef burrito wrappers. That franchise had been out of business for a couple of years, so she was very intrigued. The trail eventually led her to Hansel and Gretel, the notoriously plump siblings who lost all their extra weight from the new vegan diet the world had been put on. They became spokespeople for the Vegan World Hunger Solution and eventually replace the Jolly Green Giant on canned vegetables (a change Jack had especially supported). Could it be, Little Green Riding Hood thought, that these two have secret stash of meaty tacos? She found out after approaching them, much to her disappointment, that their bag of Taco Bell wrappers had broken open. It was a stash they had saved and used and press conferences to show what contributed to their poor health in earlier years. They thanked her for picking up the trash and hurried along.

As she continued through the thicket, a wolf approached her. Knowing she must have entered the reserved area, she clutched her basket and asked hem for directions to Granny’s.

“Your Granny should not be living in an area reserved for natural habitats, life that of my own, Little Girl,” he growled at her. “I don’t know where she is, but if it is in my territory, we might meet again.”

“That won’t be necessary!” she cried and ran off in a fright.

Just then, Prince Charming stopped on his horse to ask if she was lost and needed a ride. She eagerly accepted and mounted the horse, about which she was very curious. He told her that, in some states, horses were animals that could be owned as transportation. It was environmentally safe for the air, because, unlike cars, no carbon dioxide was released, and the animal remained unharmed.

“Part of my charm,” he claimed, “is that I care about our world.”

“I’m sure Cinderella will love that about you,” said Little Green Riding Hood.

“Cinderella? Oh no, that girl never bothers to recycle, not even her glass slippers, which she never wears anymore! I am in pursuit of Snow White, the noble maiden who has convinced the dwarves to begin reclamation on the lands they used for open-pit mining.”

“Wow,” said the inspired Little Green Riding Hood, “I hope that I can make a difference like that someday.”

“You can start today by telling your grandmother to move,” said the Prince. “She is living in reserved territory for the animals. I’ve been sent in to inspect this area and came across her cottage, which was probably built before the Wildlife Preservation laws were put into place. To give her time to recover and relocate, I will not tell the Federal Government. Hopefully they haven’t found out already.”

“Oh, thank you!” she said as he let her off the horse in front of the cottage.

He rode away while she pushed open the door, which had strangely been left ajar.

“Granny?”

“Yes?” she called from under a thick quilt.

She moved in for a closer look. “What big ears you have!”

“The better to hear the call of the wild with, my dear.”

“But Granny, what big eyes you have!”

“The better to see the ozone hole with, my dear.”

“What big hands you have!”

“The better to plant trees with, my dear.”

“What a big mouth you have!”

“The better to...read you Miranda Rights!”

A member of the Environmental Branch of the Federal Government popped from the bed. Police sprung out all over the room to begin the interrogation. Granny had already been arrested for illegal residence on reserved lands. The wolf stood indignantly to the side telling them, "That's the girl."

"Shouldn't a woodsman be saving me?" asked Little Green Riding Hood.

"He was arrested last week for logging on reserved land," replied one of the officers.

Several hearings later, it was decided that Granny be released with a small fine (in sympathy of her sickly condition) and relocated to the suburbs. Little Green Riding Hood was not bitter from the experience, but rather enlightened. She watched her grandmother get better with the nutrition of the grains, fruits, and vegetables and thought about all that she had encountered in the forest. She realized that the world was on the path to survival and that she could not go astray from it because she craved a hamburger. Many people, even President Grimm, did at times, but they still did their best to put temptations aside and do their part for a sustainable world.

All the characters have tried to adapt to a world of ecological concerns. There is still more for them to learn (Little Green Riding Hood has yet to try tofu), but the little steps they take may not make saving the planet such a fairytale.

And they all lived resourcefully ever after.

~ The End ~

Afterward

This story may seem silly, but is not without purpose. I actually chose to use Grimm's fairytale characters because their old adventures contrast and highlight the new conservation efforts that have already started taking place in our country. I wanted a comical clash to bring out the changes in how we view the world and our actions. The idea for a "Vegan World Hunger Solution" was actually rooted in health class. My teacher mentioned that many vegans wanted farmlands to be primarily used for crops instead of grazing so that the yield would be big enough to feed the whole world. I could not help but wonder if such a plan would work and how people could get used to it. Even though I am a person who enjoys animal products, I still wonder if the meat industry is really so immoral and impractical. That's when I decided to explore the theory a bit by making it the topic of my story. Whether such a plan will solve world hunger fifty years from now is uncertain to me, but I thought it would be interesting to explore the concept anyway.

Fairytales were my tool to provide humor and also a way to show how environmental concerns and conservation can change even the oldest stereotypes.