

# The Story of Little Hood

An Original Folk Tale by Greg Lam

Things happen in the woods. That is what all the stories tell. When a child is young and must be protected from the wilds, we tell her those stories that will make her fear: stories of children who wander and are slain in the woods: slain by man, by animal, or by spirits. We tell her in hopes of keeping her close and obedient.

When that child is older and the time comes when she must venture forth into the woods alone, we tell her the stories that will make her stout of heart: stories of the spirits that watch over her and protect her on her journeys.

And when that child is older still and wonders why the two kinds of stories disagree, then the time has come to tell her the **true** stories of the woods. And so this is why you will hear this story today.

Now in a small village near the forest, there once lived a young girl who was as fast as the fastest boy, and as strong as any her age. She wore a cloak made from the skin of a wolf that she hunted and killed all by herself. This is why the girl was known as "Little Hood."

And though Little Hood was strong and swift, her father worried about her terribly. He warned her about the Wendigo, the Wolf spirit who prowled the woods. A Wendigo was once a person who was born under the sign of the wolf. Once such a person turns into a Wendigo, it may either be the most evil beast in the forest, preying upon both man and animal alike, or it may become the protector spirit of the forest, watching over the souls of us all.

Now, Little Hood was confused by this. She said: "Father, I have heard that the Wendigo is the wolf spirit that protects us from evil, but now you say that it is an evil spirit itself. How is this so?"

Her father answered: "The Wendigo is a spirit that lives within us all. It is power, and as with all power, it can be used to shape or to destroy. That is its way."

Now, an evil Wendigo had been stalking the tribe for some time. Men would go into the forest to hunt and not come back, children would disappear from their tents, and gnawed-upon bones were found in the forest. Little Hood knew that Wendigos are hard to catch, for they can wear the forms of those that they've killed. And they are even harder to kill, for only one born of the sign of the wolf can slay a Wendigo.

Little Hood knew that she was one of them, for only she could understand the language of the wolves when they howled at night. So she also knew that only she could slay the Wendigo. She hatched a plan, for if she didn't kill the Wendigo, it would continue to prey upon the Abenaki. She filled a basket with dried meats, sure to attract it. And she hid a small knife inside her ponytail. She could kill him, but she would have to get very close to him indeed.

Little Hood walked through the forest, following a familiar trail and keeping an eye out for the Wendigo. At a bend in the trail, it appeared before her: It's black fur melting into the dark of the forest, almost invisible, but it's foul stench was everywhere.

"Little Hood," it said. "What a fine basket of meats you carry. To where will you bring it?"

Little Hood was terrified by it, and the beast was too far away to reach, and she knew that it knew who she was. She said the first thing to come to her mind. "To- To Grandmother's." She blinked and the thing was gone from her sight, and even from her smell. Little Hood cried, for she knew that she had just doomed her grandmother, for the Wendigo was far faster than any person was. And right then she swore that she would kill it before it could kill another.

Little Hood went quickly to her grandmother's tent and called her. A voice answered that was her grandmother's, but the stench of the Wendigo was everywhere.

"Come in." said the Wendigo, and she did. "Oh, what a fine basket of meats you've brought. Come, let's feast on these fine meats." And they did, and Little Hood waited.

After the meal, the Wendigo yawned. "Oh, how tired I feel from this meal." it said. "Shall we go to sleep together?" and Little Hood agreed. The Wendigo took to the bed and said: "Then take off your cloak, for you will need it no longer." And Little Hood did so. "Take off your skins as well, for you will need them no longer." And Little Hood did so and she stood as the Wendigo told her to enter the bed.

Little Hood took a few steps in, but stopped, and said:

"But, Grandmother, your eyes are very big today." Said Little Hood.

"It- It is because you are here today, and you are so delightful to look at." Said the Wendigo, and Little Hood took a few steps closer.

"But, Grandmother, your ears are very big today."

"It- It is because you are here today, Little Hood, and you are so delightful to listen to."  
And she took a few more steps.

"Grandmother, your teeth are very big today."

"It- It is because you are here today, and you are so delightful to eat." And the Wendigo tore off the grandmother's skin and pounced on Little Hood, swallowing her whole, for the Wendigo is far faster than a human, and Little Hood did not even have time to grab her knife.

Now, Little Hood was inside the stomach of the beast in complete darkness, cursing her stupidity and her failure. She yelled and she screamed, but then she heard a voice. "Little Hood, is that you?"

"Grandmother! I am here. The Wendigo swallowed me."

"Ah! It's swallowed me as well. We are all here. All those who have been taken by the Wendigo. We are all doomed to die here."

"No! I've brought with me a knife! I hid it in my ponytail, and we can cut our way out." And she drew the knife out and reached out into the darkness until she found its end. She plunged her knife in and she heard a great scream, like the howl that the wind makes during a blizzard.

Little Hood cut all around her in a wide circle, cutting the Wendigo in half, for as fast as the Wendigo was, it could not escape an attack from inside. And all those in the tribe escaped from the belly of the beast, who lay dying in agony on the floor.

Grandmother said: "Little Hood, you've saved us all! But look! There's a scratch on your arm!" And there was a gash from the Wendigo's claws. And there was white fur sticking out from underneath her skin. She pulled at the skin, and it fell away from her just as a snake's does when it molts. And underneath the skin was fur, just like that of the Wendigo's, but pure white instead of black. And soon Little Hood was no more. In her place stood another Wendigo, just as fearsome and strong as the first.

The people there were frightened, for they had just been eaten by one Wendigo. And Little Hood could no longer speak to explain to them, as no one else could understand the language of the wolves. She tried to talk but all she could do was roar, roar like the wind during a Blizzard. And though she could have overpowered all of those in the room by herself, she simply pointed a long, furry talon back down the path through the forest, back home. It was then that they all knew she was a good Wendigo, set to watch over them in

their travels through the woods. And so the men and women returned to the village, knowing they had Little Hood's protection.

And Little Hood is still there today, watching the paths of the woods. If you hear the sound one day while walking, a sound like the howl of the wind during a blizzard even though it's warm, you can know that it is her, watching over us in our travels through the woods.