

# Red

## Logline

RED, a naive young girl, must join forces with a rag-tag resistance of fairytale villains to stop all-the-King's-men from destroying everyone's imagination.

## Treatment

In dimly lit medieval-era streets, a pumpkin-shaped carriage pulls up. A man and a woman step out. The man is dressed in finery, while the girl is clearly poorer, but wearing her finest nonetheless. A combination of long shots, shadows and PoV shots from the man's perspective conceal his identity.

They seem to be having a good time, though the girl tries to avoid eye contact and whenever she does, she is visibly repulsed, though she tires her best to cover it up. He leads her into the shadows of an alleyway. We lose sight of them, but after a moment, we heard the girl's scream.

---

A small town in the shadow of an opulent castle. The King and his men live in splendour, while the townsfolk live in harsh poverty – children play with homemade toys, artists work with poor materials, clothes are cobbled together from what materials can be found – but the people are laughing and joking as they do their day's work with what little tools they have.

The notice boards and walls of the town have missing posters pasted on them – some so old the elements have bleached and soaked them to an almost unreadable level. A new poster is being put up – the girl from the opening sequence. A woodsman walks past the man who plasters the new notice. We follow the woodsman to his small house on the edge of town. His wife and red-headed daughter, RED, greet him as he arrives home. He has been visiting his ill mother on the far side of the forest. His daughter wishes to go see her grandmother, but father forbids it – too many girls have

been vanishing of late. He will take her with him next week. She seems unsatisfied by this.

Later, when father and mother are going about their chores, Red secretly packs a basket (with food and a doll she made to take to her grandmother) and dons a red hooded cloak. She hurries off to the edge of town and, after a moment's hesitation, she begins to walk up the long windy path through it.

As she wanders along the forest path, she hears noises around her and becomes frightened. From the underbrush two eyes appear and ask where she is going. Naively she says she is going to visit her sick grandmother. As they talk, the sound of hooves can be heard. A horse thunders by, ridden by a headless rider. As he passes them, a parcel falls from the back of his mount.

Red picks up the parcel and calls after him, but he cannot hear her. Unsure what to do, Red examines the parcel. It has no address on it, no sign of the destination; only what looks like a blue letter 'u'.

She decides aloud that she shall follow the horse's trail as surely she'll catch up with the rider once he realises that he has lost the parcel and retraces his path? The voice from the forest tells her he knows what the marking means and who the parcel is to go to. Her eyes light up – she asks him had he any plans for today and if not, could he help her deliver the parcel? The leaves part and the eyes are revealed to belong to a humanoid with a wolf's head; this is WOLF. He steps out and brushes some dirt off his suit, avoids making eye contact with her and guiltily says he had no plans for this day.

The two wander down the pathway until they hear some voices in the distance – a group of bandits have ambushed the headless rider. They're blaming 'his kind' for the missing girls. One of the men is searching his saddle bags – he is carrying nothing of interest. Red naively interrupts, "What is going on here? Let him go, he has a parcel to deliver", holding the parcel out in front of her.

Once the men see her, the parcel and Wolf, their LEADER shouts "there it is, you know what to do boys!" The headless rider is shot and the men give chase.

Red and Wolf run from the men. They won't be able to outrun them. Bullets start to fly and so Wolf grabs her arm and drags her from the path. The men follow them into the dense forest. Wolf throws Red over his shoulder and they begin to make a bit of ground. Wolf is muttering to himself "It's around here somewhere..." Eventually they run out to a clearing at the edge of a rapid river. There is an old stone bridge. "Aha" proclaims Wolf as he runs to it. Halfway across there is a rumbling, he places Red down.

"Trip, trap, trip, trap! Who's that tripping over my bridge?" Comes a gravelly voice from nowhere and everywhere at once. Wolf tells TROLL to cut out the theatrics - they need help.

Red and Wolf cross the bridge and when the men come to pursue, Troll starts to tear the bridge apart, flinging bricks at them. The survivors run away and Troll, now bridgeless, drops into the river and floats off to find a new home.

However Red and Wolf are now trapped on this side of the river, beside the black forest – home of the Bonyshanks.

Meanwhile the leader of the men - who survived Troll's attack - is brought into the audience chamber to speak in front of the KING. Surrounded by lords and knights, the man tells of how he and some friends were working away in the woods, when they saw Wolf "dragging a young girl into the forest against her will", fearing he was behind the other missing girls they gave chase until a bridge troll attacked them, securing the monster's escape and killing the king's loyal troops.

Upon the advice of his chief advisor SIR CONOMOR - a man bearing a large and bushy black beard - the King decrees that all fairytales must be locked up and put on trial for their continued crimes against the kingdom of man. Sir Conomor is to lead this charge on all things folklorish.

At the edge of the black forest – so named for the colour of the leaves upon the trees here – Wolf and Red stand, parcel in hand. Wolf tells her that with the bridge gone, the only way out is through the woods – but they must be careful, for the black forest is home of the Bonyshanks. At the mention of this name, a raspy voice calls a rhyme to them, warning them to stay away; that there is no way through the woods without

calling in on the Bonyshanks. The voice belongs to a hungry looking cat, CATKINS, in a tree. Red offers the cat the food from her basket, before her and Wolf - with no other choice - enter the woods.

After walking a while, they come across a clearing with a large wooden shack, held high above the ground on chicken legs, smoke billowing from the chimney. Wolf takes Red and they go another way, again arriving at the chicken-shack. Once more they take a different route and once more they find the clearing and its house. Red says they have no choice but to go in – the cat was right, they have to call in on the Bonyshanks.

Wolf is nervous, but follows Red as she approaches the hut. She calls out and after a moment the house crouches and the door opens. The inside is far bigger than the out. In the centre of a cosy looking living room, knitting, is an old hag, obese in places and bone-showing thin in others. She welcomes them in.

“Your friend Wolf is nervous”, speaks the BONYSHANKS, a voice like nails on a chalkboard, “He thinks I am going to eat you both.” Red is shocked by this, but the Bonyshanks confirms that, “he’s probably right. Solve my riddle and pass my test, or in my pot you both shall go!”

“Here is my Riddle”, speaks the Boneyshanks, “Children love me and use me often. But, for adults, I’m frequently lost. I can be anything or nothing. What am I?” Red thinks for a while before correctly answering “Imagination.”

Upset, the Bonyshanks asks Red to go outside, where she will find three holes; inside one is the hag’s broom made of silver birch – “bring it to me, but be warned: in the other two holes live child-eaters.”

Red goes outside and sees the holes. She stares at them unsure what to do – frightened to reach into the wrong hole. As she stares, a voice talks to her, “You helped me, now I’ll help you. When you fed me I saw a doll in your basket. Use it to test the holes,” suggests Catkins. Red takes out the doll she made for her grandma and ties string from her dress to it.

She throws the doll into the first and something reaches out, grabbing her doll. After a moment the doll is spat back out at her – half chewed and wet. She tests the second hole and nothing attacks the doll, so she nervously reaches in and finds the broom.

She returns to the Bonyshanks with the broom, followed by the cat. The hag sighs and casually blames Catkins for helping, but then says he only helps those of a good and kind heart. “I’ll let you live this day and send you safely from this place.”

As the Bonyshanks leads them to her flying cauldron she speaks to Red thus: “Some day everybody must choose between doing the easy thing and doing the right thing – which do you think most choose?”

Red doesn’t hesitate, “The right thing!”

The hag smiles sorrowfully, “I hope so, child, I hope so.”

She hands Red a candle and says, “To help you in your darkest time.”

Once Red and Wolf have climbed into the Cauldron, the Bonyshanks places Catkins in the cauldron to pilot it and they fly off.

Elsewhere, Sir Conomor is now alone with the survivor who ‘testified’ in front of the King. Conomor asks him what really happened. He tells them they were waiting for Wolf as instructed, but the men grew impatient. A headless rider came by and they attacked him. This peaks Conomor’s interest and he asks if the rider was carrying anything. The man says that he was not – Conomor relaxes – but, says the man, then the girl and Wolf arrived and they had a parcel, dropped by the rider earlier. Conomor gets angry, “Where is this parcel now?” The man says they still have it – Conomor kills the man in anger.

As Catkin pilots the cauldron high over forests and rivers, Wolf tells Catkins to bring them to the home of deRais, also known (behind his back) as Bluebeard. He tells Red that mankind has been trying to sterilise fairytales for a long time now. Bluebeard has always been rich and influential, even now when he is fading from memory. He used his money and power to fund a resistance – a network of fairytales banding together to protect each other. He shows her the Blue ‘u’ on the parcel; that is the symbol of the resistance – it’s not a u, it’s a blue beard.

The cauldron drops them off in the grounds of a fancy manor. There they are greeted by the powerful looking BLUEBEARD whose lower face is a series of swollen blue warts networked together by blood vessels. This man looks a lot like Sir Conomor, but without the bushy black beard...

When Wolf presents him with the parcel, he is very grateful, even muttering that he thought it was lost to him. He invites them into his manor, where he tells them that the King has decreed that all Fairytales are to be captured and trailed for crimes against humanity. The resistance is going to be meeting in his manor soon, so Wolf and Red may rest here until such time as everyone else arrives.

Red asks can she leave – she has delivered the parcel as she intended, but now she wishes to go see her grandma and then return to her parents – before they start to worry for her disappearance. With a kind smile on his face, Bluebeard tells her he has to go to the town tomorrow and that he will take her home then. Once there he'll provide her and her family with his coach so she may go see her grandma. In the meantime, he will send a pigeon to her father, so that he won't worry as to where she is. While they reside in his manor, he asks only one thing of them – they may have free reign of his manor, but they are not to enter the room with the blue door. With that, he leaves them.

Red decides to wander around the mansion and enjoy all the trappings of their rich host. After a while, Wolf bores and leaves to explore the grounds – he is more comfortable outdoors than in.

In a far away room, Bluebeard opens the parcel – inside is a tinderbox, which itself contains a constantly lit blue flame. His face eerily lit by the blue flame, he grins an evil grin.

As Red wanders from room to room, she sees the large blue door at the end of a corridor. Wincing, she ignores it and goes into another room. However, curiosity is getting the better of her; she keeps looking at it and forcing herself away – but it is the

only room she wants to explore. Slowly she approaches – constantly looking around her to make sure nobody is watching.

A darkness. Light spills into the room from the doorway as Red opens it. We only see Red's face, but it is clear what she sees is horrific, "The missing girls..." she murmurs in shock. The camera slowly raises and we see Bluebeard standing behind her, a sabre in his hand, a maniac look upon his face, "Little girls are always so dangerously curious..."

He swings at Red, but she dodges and runs calling to Wolf for help. Bluebeard gives chase. She trips in the grand foyer. Bluebeard charges at her for his final stab. Out of nowhere Wolf jumps in the way and takes an almighty blow. Bluebeard just laughs, "He won't really save you child, will you Wolf? Why don't you tell the girl what you were doing in the forest in the first place?"

She looks to Wolf, but he cannot meet her gaze. Bluebeard tells her he was there to eat her. Just as it is his nature to murder girls who give in to curiosity, it is Wolf's nature to eat children who stray from their parents' safe gaze. That is why mankind created them, **to enforce good behaviour** – and now they want to kill them off for doing their given tasks. Red is in tears – she trusted Wolf; she thought he was her friend.

Bluebeard refuses to die like that. Once he figures out how to use the blue flame, he'll use it to kill all the other fairytales. Then, once he is all that remains, he'll feast off people's imagination, becoming stronger. Forever hidden in the world of man, safely concealed in the King's council.

As Bluebeard prepares to finish them both, all-the-King's-men arrive. When they charge in, Bluebeard has his back to them. They say that reports saw a flying cauldron coming to his residence so they rode as fast they could to protect him.

He turns to tell them to kill these two, but when they see his face without his disguise they proclaim, "Sir Conomor! Your face! You... you're one of them!"

Realising his mistake, he fights them, but they eventually kill him, arrest Wolf and rescue Red. Unbeknownst to them, however, she managed to get the tinderbox while they fought Bluebeard.

Red is brought home by the knights. One of the King's most senior advisors tells her family they should be proud of her – she discovered a conspiracy in the King's court and also provided useful information in enforcing the King's decree of arresting fairytales. Her parents proudly hug her, but she has a vacant look on her face.

Cross dissolve to a montage of various fairytales being captured and rounded up by all-the-King's-men, as well as all the missing posters being taken down. In their place new posters for the trial of the fairytales go up. As the montage plays and they're being locked up, everything is slowly becoming grey and dull – the townspeople sad.

With all the creatures arrested and Bluebeard gone, it is safe to wander the streets once more. As Red does so she sees children standing in the streets staring at footballs, not sure how to play; artists moving brushes over canvas but in a manner such as one paints a house, not creates art, and people working in a mechanical silence.

Red wanders the forest on her way to her Grandma's house, stopping where she first met Wolf, where the bandits killed the headless horseman and where men now repair the bridge which once housed Troll.

When she gets to Grandma's house, GRANDMA sees she is sad and they talk about it. Grandma tells her that the fairytales are creatures made of imagination. When you lock up imagination, yes, you get rid of the cruelties of the world, but you also lose all wonder, hope and creativity. Then she asks which kind of world would you rather live in?

Later, when the date of the trial has come around, the King's courtyard has a guillotine platform erected in the centre, across from which sit a row of seats for the King and his advisors. Peasants flock in to see the executions of the fairytales.

Red sits in her bedroom, looking out her window and seeing the crowd gather. Her parents tell her not to worry, “I’m sure the King will do the right thing, no matter how hard that may be”. Red thinks on this and doesn’t believe it. When her parents leave her room, she takes out the tinderbox and opens it. Outside her window looking in, we see that the same blue flame from before is there. She then remembers the candle given to her by the Bonyshanks. She lights it and something happens inside the room that we cannot see – we can only see her reaction of shock and awe as the room is bathed in even more blue light.

In the courtyard, Wolf is the first of all the fairytale creatures to be lead to the guillotine. A bard calls out his list of crimes and the King asks how he pleads: guilty. A murmur ripples through the crowd. The King passes judgement: execution. As Wolf is placed in the guillotine, Red fights her way through the crowd to the platform. She climbs up it and calls to the King. The King, recognising her, halts the execution to hear her words.

She tells him that Wolf cannot be blamed for crimes that mankind imagined him up to commit. That to kill him and the other fairytales would be to kill imagination and that it would be better to re-imagine how he and his kind would to behave.

The King is unmoved by her words. He tells her it is easier this way. She says it may be easier, but it isn’t right. He ignores her and raises his hand to give the signal to drop the blade.

Red takes out the candle given to her by the Bonyshanks and lights it with the Blue Flame. Out of nowhere The MANIKIN appears – a dwarf with obsidian blackstone for skin and a mantle of blue fire in place of hair and beard. He asks her wish. She wishes for him to stop these executions. The king orders all-his-men to capture this creature, but his magic is too great. He easily defeats all-the-King’s-men, smashes the guillotine and frees all the fairytales. And, as all this is happening the greyness and dullness of before slowly lifts.

The King cowers before Red, her Manikin and Wolf as the image fades to black.

A similar view of the town as in the opening; everything is more colourful and vibrant than ever.

Children play once more, artists create fine works and people work in merriment.

No posters of any kind line the town walls.

Fairytales are now living and working side by side with the townsfolk as friendly as ever.

The palace gates are open and the King's opulence is spread around the town – nobody is rich and nobody poor.

All-The-King's-Men wear a different uniform and play with children and laugh with the townsfolk.

The King himself wanders through town with a woodman's axe, peasant clothes and a sincere smile.

In the throne room, the thrones are gone and a round council table exists with Red, Wolf and others hearing cases as needs be.

FIN