THE WOODSMAN, THE GIRL, THE GRANDMA, AND THE WOLF

When the woodsman saw the tracks in the mud, he knew something wasn’t right. The forest was too quiet and both sets were fresh, meaning the second set could only have been a moment or two behind the first. Shouldering his axe, he ran down the path just as a scream ripped the air.

Clancy loved her Grandma and tried to visit her whenever she could. It was spring, but it was not warm enough to leave home without her cloak, a red, hooded cape that her mother had made her. She prepared a basket of goodies for her grandma who hadn’t been feeling very well lately. She kissed her mother good-bye and set off into the forest, but not before her mother warned her to go directly to Grandma’s and not to dawdle or talk to strangers.

Wow. Grandma looks worse than ever, Clancy thought when she spotted her bonneted grandmother peeking out at her from under the bed covers. Strange, too, that Grandma had not opened the door for Clancy, but rather called out in a hoarse voice to enter. Usually her grandma left the front door locked, but because Clancy had been late (she’d been distracted during her journey) her grandmother had probably grown tired of waiting and unlocked the door before lying in bed.

The day was truly glorious, and after only a few minutes of walking, Clancy pulled her hood down. The sun peaked through the forest canopy and shafts of sunlight spotlighted little groups of wild flowers. Clancy yearned to pick some, but remembered her mother’s edict to go straight, so she walked on.

As Clancy approached the bed, she could see that her grandmother really wasn’t herself today. Her hands, wrinkly and small on any other day, were large—perhaps swollen—and covered in hair. “Gran, I brought you some flowers,” she ventured. Grandma just looked at her with wide eyes. Grandmother’s bonnet, too, looked stretched, and two lumps protruded on the sides. When Clancy reached the bedside, her grandmother suddenly smile a wide, toothy grin that Clancy had never seen on her nearly toothless old grandma; she exclaimed, “Grandma, what big teeth you have!”

As she neared her Grandmother’s house, Clancy paused for a moment to loosen her red cape. She was quite warm from the walk and needed to cool down. She put down her basket and started to undo the lace at the neck, when a thick, growling voice interrupted her. “Where are you off to this fine day?”

Grandma was setting the table when she heard a knock on the door. It wasn’t like Clancy to be early, but she figured her granddaughter had perhaps left early because it was so nice out. No sooner had she opened the door than she found herself surrounded by giant teeth.

“Oh!” said Clancy, “I’m off to see my grandmother.” She’d been taken off guard by the hairy creature that had silently emerged only a few feet from her. “I’d better get going though.” She grabbed the basket and started to walk on, but the creature said. “Oh really? How nice. I’m sure she’d love some of these flowers.”

“Well, yes, I had thought that, too, but I promised I’d…”

“Oh, it’ll just take a minute and no one would know. I bet your granny would love them.” At this, the creature wiped some drool from his lip and blinked hard.

“Maybe just a few then.”

When the cottage door burst open, Wolf was still trying to get the grandmothers tight nightgown over his bulging gut. He knew he was done for when he looked up to see the man and the axe coming straight towards him. He had one final thought as the blade split his belly, and little girl and her grandmother emerged from the gaping hole left by the axe:

I should have chewed my food...

CONTINUITY OF PARKS

Julio Cortazar

He had begun to read the novel a few days before. He had put it aside because of some urgent business conferences, opened it again on his way back to the estate by train; he permitted himself a slowly growing interest in the plot, in the characterizations. That afternoon, after writing a letter giving his power of attorney and discussing a matter of joint ownership with the manager of his estate, he returned to the book in the tranquility of his study which looked out upon the park with its oaks. Sprawled in his favorite armchair, its back toward the door--even the possibility of an intrusion would have irritated him, had he thought of it--he let his left hand caress repeatedly the green velvet upholstery and set to reading the final chapters. He remembered effortlessly the names and his mental image of the characters; the novel spread its glamour over him almost at once. He tasted the almost perverse pleasure of disengaging himself line by line from the things around him, and at the same time feeling his head rest comfortably on the green velvet of the chair with its high back, sensing that the cigarettes rested within reach of his hand, that beyond the great windows the air of afternoon danced under the oak trees in the park. Word by word, licked up the sordid dilemma of the hero and heroine, letting himself be absorbed to the point where the images settled down and took on color and movement, he was witness to the final encounter in the mountain cabin. The woman arrived first, apprehensive; now the lover came in, his face cut by the backlash of a branch. Admirably, she stanched the blood with her kisses, but he rebuffed her caresses, he had not come to perform again the ceremonies of a secret passion, protected by a world of dry leaves and furtive paths through the forest. The dagger warmed itself against his chest, and underneath liberty pounded, hidden close. A lustful, panting dialogue raced down the pages like a rivulet of snakes, and one felt it had all been decided from eternity. Even to those caresses which writhed about the lover's body, as though wishing to keep him there, to dissuade him from it; they sketched abominably the fame of that other body it was necessary to destroy. Nothing had been forgotten: alibis, unforeseen hazards, possible mistakes. From this hour on, each instant had its use minutely assigned. The cold-blooded, twice-gone-over re-examination of the details was barely broken off so that a hand could caress a cheek. It was beginning to get dark.

     Not looking at each other now, rigidly fixed upon the task which awaited them, they separated at the cabin door. She was to follow the trail that led north. On the path leading in the opposite direction, he turned for a moment to watch her running, her hair loosened and flying. He ran in turn, crouching among the trees and hedges until, in the yellowish fog of dusk, he could distinguish the avenue of trees which led up to the house. The dogs were not supposed to bark, and they did not bark. The estate manager would not be there at this hour, and he was not there. He went up the three porch steps and entered. The woman's words reached him over a thudding of blood in his ears: first a blue chamber, then a hall, then a carpeted stairway. At the top, two doors. No one in the first room, no one in the second. The door of the salon, and then, the knife in his hand, the light from the great windows, the high back of an armchair covered in green velvet, the head of the man in the chair reading a novel.