

## **Little Red Riding Hood**

There was once a mage who had fallen afoul of a spell gone wrong and turned himself into a werewolf, for he had purchased a substandard, non-Consortium-certified Amulet of Protection when preparing the ritual.

The Werewolf soon found that there was a way for him to regain human shape, but it involved devouring the mana and identity of other beings. Worse, this would wear off quite quickly, and so the Werewolf resigned himself to a life of murder and depriving society of value.

One dark and stormy night, as an old woman prepared for bed, the Werewolf knocked on the door of her tower – wrapped in a cloak, for his human form was fading. The woman swiftly opened the door, confident in the warding scheme of her own design.

Realizing that this mage had protections in place, the Werewolf devised a plan.

“I am a lonely traveler looking for shelter from the storm,” the Werewolf pleaded, and the woman kindly agreed to let him in.

“Could I have your name please? I must know, so that I may repay this kindness in the future,” the Werewolf said.

The woman, being old and frail and not as alert as she should have been, readily answered with her name. And so the Werewolf swiftly repaid her kindness by devouring her name, her identity and mana along with it.

The next day, Little Red Riding Hood, so named for the powerful artifact she had purchased at a Consortium auction, came knocking on the door of her grandmother’s tower.

Thinking that the girl was young and likely untrained, the Werewolf came to the door, wearing the form of the old woman. He would have succeeded in devouring the girl if it were not for her cloak, which protected her from the Werewolf’s fangs and dispelled the glamor.

Acting quickly, Little Red Riding Hood cast a fireball, which she had diligently practiced as any good mage should, burning the Werewolf to cinders.

## **The Scorpion and the Frog**

Once upon a time, a scorpion lived in the Eastern Wildlands, where mana was scarce and life was harsh. It wished to better itself, and so it decided to set out to enroll in the Academy, where it could better itself through learning.

And so it set out on a journey, through forests and hills, over rocks and under vines, until it reached a river.

Now the river was wide and swift, and the scorpion did not know any spells that would allow it to breathe underwater, nor freeze the surface, nor fly over. It couldn't see any way across.

Suddenly, it saw a frog sitting by the bank of the river. The frog, though not extremely powerful nor skilled, had decided to make the best use of its natural talents by running a ferry business, for all travelers who passed to and fro the Eastern Wildlands had no choice but to cross the river.

The scorpion approached the frog for help, only to balk at the price – the frog had a monopolistic hold over river crossing, after all. And so, the scorpion devised a plan to avoid payment: after crossing the river, it would kill the frog.

“Hello Frog!” called the scorpion. “I would like to purchase your services to cross the river!”

A naive ferryman would have immediately agreed and thus perished to the stinger of the scorpion, but the frog was wise in the ways of contract-making and had it sign a magically-binding contract, which the scorpion reluctantly did, for there was no other way to cross the river.

And so, the scorpion's plan was foiled.

The scorpion had the last laugh, however, for through perseverance and inborn talent it managed to graduate the Academy with top marks. After becoming a senior mage of the Consortium, the scorpion spearheaded a project to establish a portal network between the major cities and the wilderness beyond, including the Eastern Wildlands.

Having lost its monopoly over transport, the frog soon went bankrupt.