

Catherine Diamond

Red Cap and the Tiger of Sabrodt

Cast

Heinz, a hunter

Jan, a hunter

Ma, Red Cap's mother

Pa, Red Cap's father

Red Cap (Little Red)

Mattie, a crow

Wolf, the Tiger of Sabrodt

Gran, Red Cap's grandmother

Cat, Gran's talking cat

Meadow

Stream

Scene 1

(lights low, there is a gun shot, not necessarily loud, but clear, and the 'thump' of a body falling. Two hunters enter, examine the dead deer and begin the hunter's ritual. They turn the deer onto its right side and break off a branch of fir or oak to put in its mouth. They place a second larger branch over its body. They stand in silence, contemplating it in respect. Then Heinz tears a third sprig for Jan to wear in his hat.)

Heinz Good shot. We've got three animals today. Time to quit.

Jan I'm want to stay. I'll spend the night in the old woman's cottage and get an early start tomorrow.

Heinz All right, I'll see you next weekend. *(sees something on the ground)* Well, well, well, what's this? *(examines footprint)*

Jan *(takes a look)* Hmm. Too big for a fox.

Heinz Not a bear either.

Jan Maybe a wolf.

Heinz Wolves were all killed off a century ago.

Jan Maybe they're coming back.

Black out

Scene 2

(lights brighten a little on Red Cap house)

Ma *(calls)* Little Red, come help me with dinner. *(no answer)*

Pa She'll come as soon as it's dark.

Ma One day she'll go too far into the woods and not find her way back. And I don't like the way she talks to that ugly crow.

Pa It's her friend. With no other children around here, she's used to playing with animals.

Red *(enters with a crow on her shoulder)* A stranger's coming.

Pa *(gets up and goes out)* Where?

Red He'll be here in a few minutes. Mattie saw him.

Pa The crow has good eyes. You pay attention to him and you'll be safe.

Red Her. She's the best. She knows when to be silent and when to caw up a storm.

Pa *(crow caws)* I guess our guest is here. *(he goes to greet hunter)*

Jan Good evening. Beautiful place you've got here.

Pa Why, thank you.

Jan Are you Red Cap senior?

Pa *(laughs)* Yes, indeed. Who told you?

Hunt I spent last night in the cottage of an old lady who said her daughter lived around here.

Pa That'd be my wife's mother. Come in. We're about to eat.

Jan Thank you.

Pa Ma, this man's just seen your mother. *(Jan places his gun in the corner)*

Ma Welcome.

Jan Smells good in here.

Pa What's your name, stranger?

Jan Jan Grouse.

Ma Hunting?

Jan Yes, the farmers have hired me to shoot the deer and wild pigs eating their crops.

Pa Wild pigs eat in our field too, but I don't mind.

Ma My husband believes it's like paying a tax to wild nature. If we have to pay tax to the government to give us something, why not to nature that gives us more?

Jan That's a good philosophy. I also love nature. It's only being in the woods that I feel truly alive.

(Red Cap laughs)

Jan What's so funny, little girl?

Red You love nature? And you kill it? I wouldn't trust that kind of love.

Jan If we don't kill the deer and wild pigs, they overpopulate, and then starve to death.

Red That's only because you've already killed off all the wolves and bears that ate them naturally. All killed for pleasure by you hunters.

Jan I won't deny it. It's a grand thrill. And then, of course, eating deer and wild pig is good meat.

Red Yes, it's only *your* nature you love.

Ma Red, don't be rude.

Jan Aye, little girl. Man is a hunter. That's the way it's been and always will be.

Red Then I'm glad I'm not a man, to kill the thing he claims to love.

Jan Kill or be killed—that's nature, too.

Red Really? What's killing you?

Jan (*laughs*) Oh, boredom. The modern world. Most of us are stuck in offices during the week. Only on the weekend can we go out into the wild and feel our natural being.

Red So animals die because you're bored. A wild duck exhausted after migrating thousands of miles settles down for a rest and you shoot it. (*sarcastic*) What manliness! Such excitement!

Pa That's enough, Little Red.

Jan Perhaps you shouldn't be called 'Little Red' but 'Miss Greenheart'.

Red The creatures struggle so hard just to live even in good times.

Jan We feel deep respect for the animals, too. It's something you can't understand.

Red Don't condescend to me. I understand perfectly.

Pa (*changing subject*) So, you're looking for deer...seen anything else?

Jan (*laughs*) Nothing unusual. Now that the Eastern borders are open, who knows what we'll see. Perhaps Little Red has already seen something special

Red No.

Jan And you wouldn't tell me if you had, right?

Red Right.

Jan Say, that cap of yours is very bright. It can be seen from quite a distance in the forest.

Red You've seen me?

Jan Yes, but until now I wasn't quite sure what I'd seen. (*gets up*) Well, I'd better be get to bed early. Thank you for the delicious meal. Oh, I almost forgot to tell you (*to Ma*)—the old lady is feeling a bit poorly.

Ma I've told her she's welcome to live with us, but she's stubborn and wants to live alone.

Jan She mentioned wanting your cinnamon cakes and ale.

Pa Perhaps Little Red could take them to her.

Red Nothing would suit me better.

Ma Then we have to bake the cakes now so you can go at day break.
Black out

Scene 3

(*Red Cap is leaving the house in the morning*)

Ma Now, don't let that crow peck at the cakes. I've made a sandwich for you.

Red Thanks, Ma.

Ma Don't dawdle, and stay on the path.

Red Don't worry, I'll be back by dinner. Come, Mattie, let's go.

(*sounds through loud speakers*)

Meadow Be careful walking through the meadow. Don't step on the sleeping flowers. Hear the birds waking up the trees. The deer looks up and sees you pass. Don't bump into the spider's web. Don't crush the black beetles underfoot.

Stream Take off your shoes and pause in the cool water. The water weeds and little fish tickle your feet. Let the sound of running water clear your mind. Careful, the stones are slippery. Grab hold of a strong welcoming branch to help you climb out.

Red Mattie, we're about half way. Let's take a rest. What's this? (*she sees a small monument and reads*) The last wolf in these parts was killed here in 1904 and this stone erected to commemorate the victory.

(*A wolf is sitting, leaning against the stone, legs crossed, eyes closed in the sun.*)

Red Oh excuse me, I didn't see you.

Wolf Likewise, my apologies. (*Growls, backs away.*)

Red Don't worry, I won't hurt you.

Wolf Not so likewise. I make no promises.

Red You're a wolf, aren't you?

Wolf Last time I looked I was.

Red I'm not a hunter. Besides, killing wolves is forbidden.

Wolf (*laughs*) Forbidden? Too late for that. Only dead wolves around here.

Red Are you an illegal immigrant from the East?

Wolf My family was on this land long before yours. So, who's the illegal alien?

Red But you couldn't have been born here.

Wolf This *wolfstein* commemorates the killing of my great great granddaddy, the "Tiger of Sabrodt," the last wolf in Brandenburg. I'm the "Tiger" now and want to raise my family here.

Red Are you called "Tiger" because you're fierce and dangerous?

Wolf Oh, those old fairytales. Didn't your parents teach you that they're metaphorical.

Red What?

Wolf The old French writer Perrault who wrote the first Red Cap story wasn't talking about us real wolves. He was warning innocent young girls to stay away from evil men. The story was me-ta-phor-i-cal.

Red I thought it was a German story!

Wolf The Grimm brothers just cleaned it up. They invented a hunter to slit open the wolf and free the grandmother. It's absolutely absurd. No wolf would eat a withered old dame.

Red Perhaps he did so he could trick a tasty tender girl like me.

Wolf In the wolf version, *you* also eat your Grandmother.

Red No way!

Wolf The wolf leaves behind some of Grandmother's flesh, and Red Cap, being hungry, eats it. It's a warning to wolf children about barbarity of humans.

Red So, you've....never eaten a human.

Wolf Fortunately, I've never so desperate. Deer and wild pigs are my favorite.

Red That's why hunters hate you. You steal their game.

Wolf *Their* game? They have every other food in the world, and yet they get angry when I kill one animal to eat.

Red Are you sure you don't want to eat me?

Wolf Quite sure, but I wouldn't mind that ham sandwich.

Red Oh sure. (*gives it to him*) Are you alone?

Wolf Yes, but my family is not far behind.

Red Oh look. The sun is already setting. I'll never make it to Gran's house and back home in time. Thank you for the very interesting conversation.

Wolf You'd better hurry. The woods are a dangerous place at night.
Black out

Scene 4

(*At Red Cap's house*)

Pa What do you mean you *talked* with a philosophical wolf?

Red He told me all about his family history.

Ma Your Gran was waiting for her cakes and ale. She'll be furious.

Red I'll go tomorrow.

Pa No, not with wolves out there.

Red If he wanted to kill me, he already had the chance.

Ma Maybe he had just finished eating. Don't talk to animals. People will think you're crazy.

Pa (*realizes something*) Aha!

Red/Ma What?

Pa Jan, that hunter is after the wolf!

Red But it's forbidden to hunt wolves.

Pa Only because there weren't any.

Red If that hunter is here to kill my wolf, I won't let him.

Ma You stay away from both of them.

Pa If wolves are back, the ban might be lifted.

Ma (*to Red Cap*) But that's not you're affair.

Red If not mine, then whose? I've talked to him!

Ma Go to bed. I'll have to take the cakes and ale myself tomorrow.

Red Oh no, Ma. I'll go. I'll stay on the path...and not talk to anyone till I get to her house. I promise!

Pa No, wait a few days, and if we hear nothing more about Jan or the "Tiger," you can go.
Black out

Scene 4

(At Gran's house)

Gran *(draining the bottle)* Drat! Where's that girl? I was certain she'd come right away, but it's been almost a week and still no sign of her.

Cat She probably ate our cakes and is too ashamed to come

Gran Nonsense. She dawdled in the woods, forgetting all about me.

Cat Then you'll just have to trick her into coming.

Gran How?

Cat What does Red Cap love most?

Gran The forest and all its creatures. She doesn't care much for humans. Not even her dear old Gran.

Cat So why don't you disguise yourself as a wild animal and go into the woods.

Gran If I go as deer I might be attacked by another animal or shot by a hunter.

Cat What if you dressed as a wolf?

Gran But there aren't any wolves around here.

Cat Precisely. And wolf hunting is banned, so you're safe. You dress up as one, and I guarantee she'll come to you.

Gran My goodness! What's this world coming to when a Gran has to dress in wolf's clothing to see her granddaughter...

Cat ...and get her cakes and ale.

Gran What'll I wear?

Cat You have some dog skins we can sew up. We'll make some pointy ears and large mouth with sharp teeth.

Gran Can't I just buy a rubber mask made in China?

Cat Come on, we'll make a good costume.

Gran *(dresses up and walks on all fours)* I look like wolfwoman rather than a real wolf.

Cat I don't think there's ever been a wolf *woman* before.

Gran And all this crawling around hurts my knees.

Cat Well, get up. Wolves don't walk on their knees.

Gran (*on her hands and toes*) This is worse.

Cat Truly, I can only help you look like a wolf, but I can't teach you to move like one. Now try howling.

Gran (*she howls, and Cat shivers*)

Cat That was too good. Are you sure you aren't part wolf?

Gran You think I only speak 'Cat'? I know many animal languages.

Cat I didn't know you knew dead languages like 'wolf.' Now, go find a comfortable place under a tree, and cry as if you were injured. Red Cap will hear, and rush to rescue you.

Gran Good idea. I hope what you said about 'no wolf hunting' is true.

Cat Just to be safe, I'll hide in the tree above you and keep watch.

Black out

Scene 5

(*at the Wolfstein*)

Red You've got to go. A hunter is looking for you.

Wolf Go where? We're hated everywhere, like gypsies, and like gypsies we need lots of land to freely roam.

Red Everyone needs freedom.

Wolf Hah, most people don't. They lock themselves in little boxes called houses. They move in little boxes called cars. They eat food from little boxes called *bian dang*. They only feel safe and happy in boxes. No, they don't want freedom; they fear it.

Red They fear wolves.

Wolf Utterly irrational. And all because of those damn fairytales. Prejudice! Evil stereotypes! But at least here, I'm protected by law.

Red Laws can be changed.

Wolf I won't run any more.

Red But it's so close to Berlin, the capital. At least go deeper into the woods.

Wolf They'll have to find a way to live with me.

Red But what will you eat? The hunters already kill the quota of deer. You can't eat sheep or the farmers will find a way to kill you.

Wolf Rabbits, badgers, even foxes, if I have to.

Red People's cats and dogs, too?

Wolf Maybe. You didn't bring another sandwich, did you? *(she gives him the sandwich)*
Would Gran notice if I took just a little swig of ale?

Red I don't think she'll mind

Wolf *(drinks)* Ah, very good.

Red Don't drink too much!

Wolf Just one more sip. *(drinks again)* I really needed that. *(sighs)* You don't know how it feels to be always be hated.

Red I don't hate you. Environmentalists are fighting for your right to be here.

Wolf I no longer belong anywhere. *(sighs, gives back empty bottle)* Even you wear me out. I'm a wild creature, not a dog, not a 'wolfman,' just a wolf. I'd be happiest if you'd just leave me alone.

Red Won't I ever see you again?

Wolf You might hear me howl on a moonlit night.

Red I'll howl back.

Wolf That'd give me a good laugh.
(they hear a cry)

Red What was that? Another wolf?

Wolf Hardly. A poor imitation. Probably that hunter you were talking about. I'm gone. Remember, you never saw me. *(dashes away)*

Red I'll never betray you. *(sees bottle is empty)* Gran is going to be furious. Come Mattie, we'll have to spend the night with her.
Black out.

Scene 6

(in the woods)

Jan *(looks at ground)* The footprints are fresh. He must be close by. *(hears a whimper)*
What's that? Maybe he's injured. *(looks through binoculars sees Gran)* Wow! He's bigger than I ever imagined. A monster! *(shoots, Gran screams and dies. Jan goes to the body. He lifts the head and the mask comes off)*

What? The old woman? What kind of trick is this? What was she doing? Oh my God! Who will believe it was a mistake? Wait! I'll make it look like a wolf killed her. No, she's got a bullet in her. But if I take her out of the costume, and stuff it with pine needles to fill it out, it will look like a wolf. I'll say I thought a wolf was attacking her and shot. It was an honest mistake. A terrible accident. *(he makes the preparations)* *Black out.*

Scene 7

(In Red Cap's house)

Ma It looks like Little Red won't be home before dark.

Pa She probably decided to spend the night at your mother's house.

Ma But we don't know if she's there.

Pa I don't worry since she's got the crow. If anything is wrong, the crow will fly back to us. By the way, did you hear that shot this afternoon?

Ma I did.

Pa I can't say I like having hunters this close. Men with guns make me nervous.

Ma If Red Cap doesn't show up tomorrow, we'll have to go look for her, crow or no crow.

Scene 8

(Little Red enters Gran's house)

Red Gran! Gran! Strange, she's not in the house or the garden. Mattie, take a look around.
(Mattie caws frantically)

Red What? Show me. *(discovers the body)* Oh no! Tiger? Gran! Mattie, Gran's dead. But this 'wolf' is fake. How could it kill her? This is too weird.

Cat *(comes down out of the tree)* I am the witness to all that's happened. I am the only one surviving this terrible tragedy that knows the whole story, how it began, and went terribly awry. I alone am privy...

Red Tell me.

Cat I was the one who suggested....*(remembers he proposed the scheme)*, Well, actually, I didn't really, in fact, I can't remember exactly. It was so chaotic, everything happened so suddenly.

Red What happened here, beneath the tree?

Cat In fact, my vision was obstructed. You see that branch there blocked my view, I...

Red But you heard the shot!

Cat Yes, indeed, I heard a shot, but when I looked, both wolf and Gran had fallen.

Red Who was the shooter?

Cat That, I couldn't say.

Red You're useless! Gran loved you and you can't even identify her killer.

Cat The shot came from far away, behind that boulder, or those bushes, or that tree.

Red But who made this fake wolf?

Cat Why Gran herself.

Red Why?

Cat She was uh, uh, practicing magic. Yes. When you didn't come, she had a dream that you had talked to a wolf, so she made a fake wolf to burn so that the wolf wouldn't attack you. A hunter must have thought it was a real wolf attacking her and shot it. Yes, I am certain that's what happened.

Red Oh, poor Gran. It's all my fault. I did talk to a wolf. Oh, now they'll really want to kill him. (*she cries*)

Mattie (*caws*)

Red Oh Mattie, I've done a terrible thing. I'll never talk to animals again. No, not even you.

Mattie (*caws*)

Red No, I won't. I don't understand your language anymore. Oh, Gran, please forgive me. I'll live here in your house, keep your garden growing, I'll...oh Mattie, stop. Can't you see I'm grieving? Even crows are supposed to understand grief.

Mattie (*caws*)

Red What? What's that? The wolf in danger from Jan? I don't care anymore. It's because I talked to him that Gran got killed. It's his fault. I won't go.

Cat You should help him. It wasn't his fault.

Red Shut up! I don't understand 'cat.'

Cat Oh, but you do. You know you'll feel bad if you do nothing to save the Tiger.

Red Shut up!

Cat Mattie, fly high and see where the wolf and hunter are. We'll follow (*they run, they hear a shot*)

Red Did you hear that? Maybe the Tiger has already been killed.

Cat Hurry, follow Mattie.

Red (*sees a dead deer*) Oh, it's a deer. Jan is a good shot. The animal didn't suffer.

Cat Dead is still dead.

Red But where's Jan? Perhaps, he's left the deer hoping to lure the wolf.

Jan (*sees Wolf running*) There he is. I'll keep chasing him toward the road. (*looks behind*)

Red Mattie, pounce on Jan's head. Stop him! (*they run off stage*)

Jan The girl! Damn, I have to get rid of her. (*shoots in the air*)

Red (*screams*) Mattie, are you hurt?

Cat Jan's warning us to stay away.

Red Mattie what's happening? The wolf is running toward road? (*they hear a bark and then a screech of tires, Mattie caws wildly*)

Jan (*runs up to the car*) Good work, Heinz. Spot on.

Heinz Hurry, get him in the sack and let's go.

Jan We might have been seen.

Heinz By who?

Jan A girl who lives in the woods.

Heinz I don't like that.

Jan All she saw was an accident.

Heinz She saw you chasing the wolf?

Jan There's no law against running after a wolf. I startled it by shooting the deer and you accidentally hit it as it dashed across the road.

Heinz Yes, all right. (*exit*)

Black out

Scene 9

(Little Red is pouring elderflower ale on the ground where Gran was shot and praying)

Ma That's not Gran's grave.

Red It's where she died...strangely, in the embrace of the wolf. I can't get the picture out of my mind.

Ma Let's go home now.

Red No, I'm going to live in her house. I'm going to protect the Tiger's family. I saw the female and two pups yesterday. (*she moves further off and pours more ale*)

Ma Now what are you doing?

Red A prayer for the Tiger. I've made a new *wolfstein*. 'Here, after 110 years of exile, the first wolf returned to Brandenburg, his home.

The End