

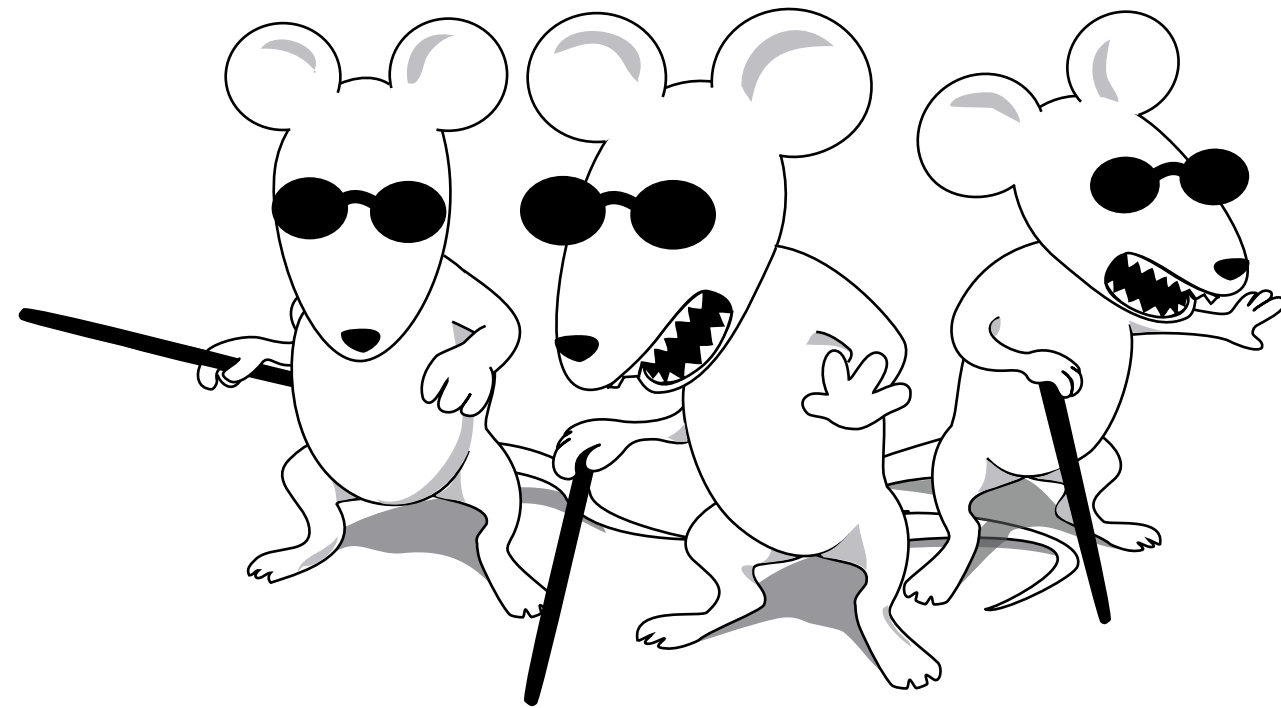
THE WRONG PATH

ONCE UPON A TIME there was a little country girl, born in a country village, the ugliest little creature that was ever seen. A red riding-hood she was forced to wear, so that when she was seen approaching, country villagers would be able to gather assorted fruits and vegetables to throw at her. So Little Red Riding-Hood traveled from town to town, collecting assorted fruits and vegetables to support her vagabond mother and her hobo grandmother.

ONE DAY, Riding-Hood ventured with some sauerkraut over the hills and into the woods where her grandmother's shack lay. After she had been skipping for many miles, the well-traveled road split into two paths, the first leading to Grandmother's house and the second toward general peril. The correct path was clearly marked by a sign, but because Red Riding-Hood was so ugly, she was not able to read, and thus she proceeded down the wrong path.

SOON, she spotted a house in the distance. Since she received no response to her knocking, she decided to see how the household's many valuables would fit within her pockets. As she reached the stairs, the door creaked open. Paralyzed with fear, Riding-Hood found herself staring into the eyes of three bears. The largest spoke: "Who's up in this house? This ain't no bed and breakfast! Hey, come back here, girl, I ain't through talking to you! Why you be all running away now? Psh."

TO THE PATH Riding-Hood returned, and on it she ran as fast as if three famished bears whose house she had just been caught ransacking were chasing her, which they were. Riding-Hood paused, sure that she had lost the bears. As her eyes wandered around the forest, three small mice emerged from the underbrush, all wearing sunglasses and prodding the ground before them with sticks. "Oh little girl, what have you there? Sauerkraut, oh that's nice, it's



been so long since we've eaten CHEW HER ACHILLES TENDON FIRST SO SHE CAN'T RUN AWAY!" A swarm of blind mice emerged from the forest, encircling Riding-Hood, tapping the ground in search of her.

FORTUNATELY, at that moment a wandering knight named Don Quixote leapt from the shadows yelling "This maiden rests under my protection." The mice stayed their movement.

"MANY THANKS," said Riding-Hood, "but technically you're not a fairy-tale character."

"ACK! Your hideousness makes me want to remove my entrails!" screamed Don Quixote as he fled. She tailed him to a tower that stood even deeper in the woods. By the time she reached its base, Don Quixote had already scaled the tower by climbing a fair maiden's unbelievably long yet inexplicably well-kept hair.

"LET IT DOWN, LET IT DOWN!" begged Riding-Hood.

"PULL IT UP, PULL IT UP!" pleaded Don Quixote with the maiden.

CONFUSED AND DISTRESSED, Riding-Hood knew not what to do. From behind, a voice whispered, "You look down, miss. Need some help? I happen to have what you need to get high off the ground. Magic bean sprouts, that's right." She turned to face the figure, and his face went pale. Unable stand the sight of her, he ate his magic bean sprouts, and from his husk erupted a huge green hulk of a beanstalk, easily as tall as the tower.

COINCIDENTALLY, the beanstalk knocked the tower down.

THROUGH THE AIR the knight plummeted, his fall soon broken by the ground and his back soon broken by the maiden. As Riding-Hood stared, perplexed, he scrambled from beneath the maiden and ran down the path, yelling like a small schoolgirl. Riding-Hood attempted to follow, but after many miles she found herself lost.

FURTHER SHE WANDERED, until she gazed upon the remains of a cottage made entirely of load-bearing bakery goods being white-washed with sugar by a witch. "Dear me, another meal so soon?" cried the witch, but when Riding-Hood approached her, she hissed, "You are too misshapen to look at for extended periods of time, and far too revolting to even consider eating!" The witch placed a brown paper bag over Riding-Hood's head and chanted a spell. "Now begone, foul creature," commanded the witch, and Riding-Hood disappeared.

UPON AWAKENING, Riding-Hood found herself on the path towards her Grandmother's house. Looming above her was a wolf, whose outline she could just make out through the brown paper bag on her head. "Why is your mouth so appropriately shaped for someone of my stature and general body mass?" Riding-Hood questioned.

"ALL THE BETTER to eat you with," the Wolf replied. And he did.

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