

THE ROOTIN' TOOTIN' TALE OF LITTLE RED RIDING BOOTS

By Stephen Frankenfield

Copyright © MMXXIV by Scott Mullen, All rights reserved.

ISBN: 978-1-61588-558-9

CAUTION: Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that this Work is subject to a royalty. This Work is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America and all countries with which the United States has reciprocal copyright relations, whether through bilateral or multilateral treaties or otherwise, and including, but not limited to, all countries covered by the Pan-American Copyright Convention, the Universal Copyright Convention and the Berne Convention.

RIGHTS RESERVED: All rights to this Work are strictly reserved, including professional and amateur stage performance rights. Also reserved are: motion picture, recitation, lecturing, public reading, radio broadcasting, television, video or sound recording, all forms of mechanical or electronic reproduction, such as CD-ROM, CD-I, DVD, information and storage retrieval systems and photocopying, and the rights of translation into non-English languages.

PERFORMANCE RIGHTS AND ROYALTY PAYMENTS: All amateur and stock performance rights to this Work are controlled exclusively by Heuer Publishing LLC. No amateur or stock production groups or individuals may perform this play without securing license and royalty arrangements in advance from Heuer Publishing LLC. Questions concerning other rights should be addressed to Heuer Publishing LLC. Royalty fees are subject to change without notice. Professional and stock fees will be set upon application in accordance with your producing circumstances. Any licensing requests and inquiries relating to amateur and stock (professional) performance rights should be addressed to Heuer Publishing LLC.

Royalty of the required amount must be paid, whether the play is presented for charity or profit and whether or not admission is charged.

AUTHOR CREDIT: All groups or individuals receiving permission to produce this Work must give the author(s) credit in any and all advertisement and publicity relating to the production of this Work. The author's billing must appear directly below the title on a separate line where no other written matter appears. The name of the author(s) must be at least 50% as large as the title of the Work. No person or entity may receive larger or more prominent credit than that which is given to the author(s).

PUBLISHER CREDIT: Whenever this Work is produced, all programs, advertisements, flyers or other printed material must include the following notice: ***Produced by special arrangement with Heuer Publishing LLC.***

COPYING: Any unauthorized copying of this Work or excerpts from this Work is strictly forbidden by law. No part of this Work may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form, by any means now known or yet to be invented, including photocopying or scanning, without prior permission from Heuer Publishing LLC.

HEUER PUBLISHING LLC
P.O. BOX 248 • CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA 52406
TOLL FREE (800) 950-7529 • FAX (319) 368-8011

THE ROOTIN' TOOTIN' TALE OF LITTLE RED RIDING BOOTS

By Stephen Frankenfield

SYNOPSIS: Once upon a time in the old west lived the fastest sling-shot slinger this side of the Grimms Desert. Her name was Little Red Riding Boots, and she lived happily with her Papa, who's famous for his spicy-hot beef jerky. One day, she gets word that her Gran is sick in bed with a terrible head-cold, and the only remedy is her Papa's famous beef jerky. So, she puts on her red cowboy boots, grabs hold of her trusty slingshot, and heads out into the wild west, towards Gran's house. Along the way, she meets Cornelius Cottontail, a rabbit who has a hankering for beans—if he could just get the can open! Can Cornelius help Red get to Gran's house safely, or will they run into unexpected trouble? Because hiding behind the prickly pear and the tumbleweeds along the dusty dirt roads is Big Bad Coyote Jack, and he has other plans for Red, Gran, and that delicious bag of beef jerky.

DURATION: 45 minutes.

TIME: The ole west.

SETTING: The Town of Grimm and its surrounding deserts.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(2 females, 3 males, 2 either)

RED (f)	Our hero. (194 lines)
PAPA (m).....	Our hero's papa, who makes the best spicy beef jerky in the old west. (68 lines)
GRAN (f)	Our hero's grandma, a sweet old lady who is suffering from a head-cold. (99lines)
BIG BAD COYOTE JACK (m)	A conniving coyote who will stop at nothing for some of Papa's spicy beef jerky. (108 lines)

- COWBOY SAM (m)Fastest slingshot in the old west. He always has a story to tell... and I mean, always. *(82 line)*
- CORNELIUS COTTONTAIL (m/f).....A desert creature, who wants nothing more than to open his can of beans. *(137 lines)*
- POSTMAN (m/f)An armadillo who just wants to deliver the mail and get home to his family but instead gets dragged into all the fun. *(32 lines)*

CASTING NOTE: All characters are gender flexible and up to the director's discretion. Permission to update pronouns in the script is granted.

OPTIONAL DOUBLING

- PAPA can double as COWBOY SAM
- BIG BAD COYOTE JACK can double as POSTMAN

COSTUMES

- RED – red cowboy boots, red western skirt, white button-up shirt, and a red cowboy hat
- PAPA –jeans, button up shirt, vest, cowboy boots, cowboy hat
- GRAN – nightgown, shawl, bonnet
- BIG BAD COYOTE JACK – jeans, black button-up shirt, vest, bandana, black cowboy hat with coyote ears
- COWBOY SAM – Jeans, button-up shirt, vest, cowboy boots, cowboy hat
- CORNELIUS COTTONTAIL – jeans, button-up shirt, vest, cowboy boots, top hat with cottontail ears
- POSTMAN – jeans, backpack fashioned to look like an armadillo

SET

Simple, easy-to-move set pieces. In the original production, we used fake cactus and rocks for the desert scenes. For Gran's house, we had a table, and a rocking chair.

PROPS

- ☐ slingshot
- ☐ envelopes (mail)
- ☐ mail bag
- ☐ letters
- ☐ pen
- ☐ bag of world famous beef jerky
- ☐ bag of cans
- ☐ canteen
- ☐ basket
- ☐ cans of beans
- ☐ can opener
- ☐ soda cans

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

This is a fast-paced over the top show, which will be greatly enhanced by cartoon-like characterization. At the same time, don't be afraid to lean into the heart of the play. For instance, the relationship between Red and her Papa. He continues to appear throughout the show, because of the bond they have. It is most definitely meant to be silly but also very sweet.

PREMIERE PRODUCTION

THE ROOTIN' TOOTIN' TALE OF LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD premiered at the Live Theatre Workshop in Tucson, AZ.

SCENE 1

AT START: *Lights up. We are at the ranch of RED and PAPA. PAPA stands center stage, behind, and slightly to the side of his daughter, RED. He is watching her closely, as she carefully aims her slingshot off into the distance.*

PAPA: Take your time, Red. Nice and steady. Nice. And. Steady. Red, be one with the target. Focus.

RED: Got it, Papa.

PAPA: See your target, as if it's *just* out of reach.

RED: Right, Papa.

PAPA: ...one with the target.

RED: Okay.

PAPA: Concentrate. And focus.

RED: Yup.

PAPA: Focus. Simply focus. (*Long pause, then quietly, almost in a whisper.*) Focus.

RED: I'm trying!

PAPA: Sorry. I'm just trying to help.

RED: I know, Papa. But I can do this.

PAPA: I know you can, Red. Sorry. Go ahead.

RED turns back to her target. She takes a deep breath and slowly lets it out. She brings the slingshot to eye level and closes one eye, steadying her aim. The target has her full concentration. She is one with the target. It is only her and the target. Then...

PAPA: Focus—

She lets go of the band and it flies way off target, hitting and breaking a window in the distance.

PAPA: Not another window. That's the fifth one this week.

RED: (*Turns to PAPA.*) Papa?

PAPA: Yes, Red?

RED: Could you stand over there, please?

PAPA: Oh. Yeah, of course.

RED: Thanks, Papa. *(PAPA reluctantly takes a very small step away from RED.)* A little further. *(He takes another small step.)* A little more. *(Another step.)* Further. *(Another step.)* Okay, now two giant steps back. *(He takes two giant steps back.)* That spot right there is perfect.

PAPA: Right here?

RED: Yes, right there. Don't move an inch.

PAPA: But—

RED: Not an inch.

PAPA: Yeah, but—

RED: Super Glue is all over the bottom of your boots, and you're stuck to that spot, okay?

PAPA: *(Worried.)* Super Glue?

RED: *(Intensely.)* Super Glue.

PAPA: Okay.

RED turns back toward her target. She lifts her slingshot, closes one eye and slowly pulls back on the band. When she is ready, she lets go! They both look hopeful as they watch the rock fly off into the distance towards the target. Then... SMASH!! ...another window breaks.

PAPA: And that's six.

RED: What am I doing wrong? I've done everything you've taught me. *(RED looks back at PAPA, who is standing very still. He looks worried.)* What's wrong?

PAPA: Do I still have Super Glue on my feet?

RED: *(She smiles.)* No, Papa.

PAPA: *(He takes a careful step from his spot.)* Good. Thought I'd be stuck there all day.

RED: *(Still smiling.)* Don't make fun of me, Papa.

PAPA: I would never make fun of my little girl. Maybe tease her a little, but never make fun.

RED: You know, I wasn't standing there ALL day.

PAPA: No, of course not. *(Laughs.)* Just most of it.

RED: It's not my fault you never told me there wasn't glue on my feet. I was only five, *of course* I stood there all day.

PAPA: (*Laughs.*) And now you've grown up and turned that trick around on your old man.

RED: Well, I guess I've learned from the best. Although you wouldn't think so, watching me use this slingshot.

PAPA: Red, you just need to believe in yourself. And focus. (*Together.*) Always focus.

RED: (*Together.*) Always focus, I know Papa.

PAPA: That's my girl. (*They high-five—or do a kind of silly handshake—then he pulls her into a hug.*) Well, I better see how much beef jerky I've got to make up for those windows. We're lucky all our neighbors like it so much. It pays for a lot of glass. I think I see the Postman coming. Could you grab the mail, Red?

RED: Sure, Papa.

PAPA exits. POSTMAN enters carrying a bag of mail. He sorts through a bundle as he approaches. RED—her back to the POSTMAN—kneels down and picks up a “rock” from the ground, pulls out her slingshot and aims. (Always time to practice.) She turns quickly and...

POSTMAN: (*Throws up his hands in fear. The letters go flying.*) Don't shoot! I'm too young!

RED: Sorry. I'm sorry.

POSTMAN: Could you...? (*Indicating her slingshot, which is still pointing at him.*)

RED: Oh, sure. Sorry.

POSTMAN: Wow. I think I saw my life flash before my eyes. That was a close one.

RED: Not really.

POSTMAN: What are you talking about? You had that thing aimed right at me.

RED: Yeah, it wouldn't have made a difference. My aim is a little... off.

POSTMAN: It can't be that bad.

RED: (*Points to the windows in the distance.*) See all those windows?

POSTMAN: (*Sees them.*) Oh. Yeah, I guess you're right. I had nothing to worry about.

RED: See?

POSTMAN: *(Begins to pick up letters, with RED'S help.)* Just keep practicing. You'll get it.

RED: I hope so.

POSTMAN: *(Looking through the mail.)* Well, let's see... here it is!
(Pulls out an envelope and hands it to RED.)

RED: Who's it from?

POSTMAN: Not sure. An old woman handed it to me.

RED: *(Looks at the envelope.)* It's from my Gran!

POSTMAN: Well, isn't that sweet. *(Stands there awkwardly for a moment, looking over RED'S shoulder as she opens the letter. RED turns to him. Beat.)* Oh. Yeah. Okay, then... bye! *(Exits.)*

RED: Bye. *(Shouts off stage.)* Papa! We got a letter from Gran!

PAPA re-enters, carrying a bag of his world-famous, spicy beef jerky.

PAPA: Oh yeah? Is everything okay?

She opens up the envelope and pulls out the letter. At the same time, GRAN enters upstage right. She is in her house, wearing a robe and bonnet. She is carrying a box of tissues, and it is obvious that she is not feeling too well. She sits in her chair and begins to write a letter. At the same time, RED begins to read it. [NOTE: Parts of the letter are read by GRAN, other parts by RED. And some, by both.]

GRAN: *(Together.)* My dear Son. I'm afraid I'm not feeling too well.

RED: *(Together. Reading.)* My dear Son. I'm afraid I'm not feeling too well.

PAPA: I wonder what's wrong.

RED: *(Continues reading.)* I have a terrible head-cold.

PAPA: Oh.

GRAN: I've tried to take some home-made remedies, but it doesn't seem to be helping. But do you know what I think would help?
(Together.) Some of your world-famous spicy beef jerky.

PAPA: *(Together.)* Some of my world-famous spicy beef jerky.

RED: (*Together. Reading.*) Some of your world-famous spicy beef jerky. That always clears up my sinuses and makes me feel brand new. Not to mention it's the tastiest treat this side of the Grimms River.

PAPA: Well, I don't wanna brag, but she's right.

GRAN: I know I'm right! And you don't have to brag. (*RED and PAPA look at one another, confused. How did she do that?*) If you could please bring some of your spicy beef jerky, I would be incredibly grateful.

RED: Can we take some of your beef jerky to Gran's?

PAPA: Well, I would love to, but I'm afraid I'm just too busy right now.

GRAN: And, son, you better not tell me you're too busy to come help your mama.

PAPA: How does she do that?

GRAN: I'm your mama! That's how!

PAPA: (*Taking letter from RED.*) It doesn't say that, does it? (*Reading letter.*) "I'm your mama! That's how!"

RED: It would make her feel better, Papa.

PAPA: I know, Red, but I'm backed up with my orders of beef jerky. If I don't get them out soon, they'll start buying from other people, and I'll no longer be the number one beef jerky supplier in Grimms Town.

RED: Then I'll go!

PAPA: No way!

RED: Why not?

PAPA: Because it's a dangerous trail to Gran's house.

RED: So? I can defend myself.

PAPA: I know you can, but.... I just... I don't think so, Red. I'm just not comfortable letting you go on your own. Anyway, your Gran would never want you to travel all by yourself through The Grimms Desert.

GRAN: May I make a suggestion?

RED and PAPA both look down at the letter, as if they heard GRAN'S voice come from it.

PAPA: (*To the letter.*) Uhmmm... sure, I guess.

GRAN: Why don't you just let Red bring me the beef jerky.

PAPA: She can't go by herself.

RED: *(Together.)* Yes, I can!

GRAN: *(Together.)* Yes, she can!

PAPA: *(Begins to fold the letter.)* That's it, I'm not—

GRAN: Wait! Before you fold me up. *(PAPA slowly unfolds the letter.)*

Just remember who was there for you all those times you were sick.

Who covered you with blankets when you were cold, who put an ice pack on your head when you were hot? That's right. *(Together.)* Me.

PAPA: *(Together.)* You.

GRAN: So, just think about that as I sit here feeling miserable.

(Coughs a couple times.) Well, I guess I'll be going now. I love you,

son. *(Coughs, as she begins to fold the letter she's been writing.)*

PAPA: Wait! *(GRAN unfolds her letter.)* Okay, I'll let Red bring you some beef jerky.

RED: *(Together.)* Yes!

GRAN: *(Together.)* Yes!

PAPA: *(To RED.)* But you better be very careful.

RED: I promise, I will.

GRAN: And with that, I reckon I'd better go. Much love to you both.
Gran.

PAPA folds the letter and places it in the envelope. GRAN folds her letter, puts it in an envelope, just as POSTMAN enters. She hands him the letter and exits. He continues across the stage and also exits, on his way to deliver the letter to RED and PAPA.

PAPA: Okay, then, Red. If you're going, you should know something.

The Grimms Desert is a dangerous place. It's hot. And when the heat starts to get to you, you can go a little crazy. And if the heat doesn't get to you, the dangerous animals out there will. And they will stop at nothing to eat, and if you're in between them and their source of food... you have no chance whatsoever! *(Beat.)* Besides that, I think you'll have a good time. Now, let's make sure you have enough ammo for your journey.

RED: As long as there's rocks on the ground, I'll have plenty of ammo. And I'll be sure to take lots of water.

PAPA: *(Looks at her for a moment.)* I'm proud of you, Red. And remember, only pull out that slingshot if it's absolutely necessary. And if that time comes, if you think it will help, imagine me standing beside you.

RED: I'm not sure that would help, Papa. But I'll think about it.

PAPA: Fair enough.

RED: Maybe I should give it one more shot before I leave. *(Pulls out her slingshot.)*

PAPA: No, Red! Please. I have enough windows to pay for.

RED: But Papa—

PAPA: Red.

RED: Yes, Papa.

PAPA: Now let's go get you the supplies you'll need for your travels. *(Exits.)*

RED begins to exit, then stops and turns, facing the many windows she has broken. She has a determined face on, as she slowly pulls up her slingshot. One more try won't hurt. She carefully pulls back and lets go! And... CRASH!!

PAPA: Red!!

RED: Oops. Coming! *(She quickly exits.)*

Blackout.

SCENE 2

AT START: *Lights up. We are in the Grimms Desert. CORNELIUS COTTONTAIL enters, a bag over his shoulder. He is carrying a small can in one hand, and in the other, a rock. He is working on getting the can open, hitting it with the rock at all different angles. He hears something off in the distance. He puts the can in the bag, runs and hides behind a cactus. RED enters, carrying a basket. She's been traveling for miles and it shows. She looks around and takes a drink from her canteen and enjoys a giant gulp. She looks around, visibly lost. She wipes the sweat from her forehead and continues offstage.*

CORNELIUS comes out from behind the cactus. He looks in the direction RED went. As this is happening, BIG BAD COYOTE JACK enters from behind him. CORNELIUS takes a step backwards and runs right into JACK. He slowly turns to face him. JACK waves.

CORNELIUS: Can we talk about this? (*JACK goes to grab him, but CORNELIUS ducks.*) Guess not!

As they switch places, JACK pulls out his slingshot and aims it at CORNELIUS.

JACK: Freeze! (*CORNELIUS stops.*) Now put your hands in the air.

CORNELIUS: Is that really necessary?

JACK: I said, put 'em up!!

CORNELIUS: Absolutely necessary! I see your point.

JACK: What have you got in that bag of yours, rabbit?

CORNELIUS: Okay, so, technically, you're right, I am a rabbit, but I prefer the term, cottontail. It's just more specific to who I am.

JACK: Quiet down, rabbit! (*Threatens with slingshot.*)

CORNELIUS: Or rabbit. Whichever. Up to you. I think animals are too concerned with labels these days. What do you think?

JACK: I think you should pipe down and hand over what's inside that bag.

CORNELIUS: Usually, I would, seriously, no questions asked, but you see, I've been collecting these for awhile, and I'm not too keen on giving them up. I'm sure you understand. (*JACK grabs the bag.*) Or not.

They struggle for the bag, as we hear RED offstage.

RED: (*Offstage.*) Hello!

JACK lets go of the bag and pulls CORNELIUS close to him, as if they're old pals. RED enters.

RED: Hello. I thought I heard someone.

JACK: Yes, just us... friends.

CORNELIUS: Friends?

JACK: Yes, friends! *(Pulls him in close.)*

CORNELIUS: *(Frightened.)* Best friends. Two animals could not get any closer than we are. We tell each other everything. We're like two peas in a pod. His ying to my yang. Like a cold glass of water in the hot desert. Biscuits and gravy. Spaghetti and meatballs. Peanut butter and jelly... or honey, depending on your preference. *(Pause.)* I prefer honey.

JACK: Are you done?

CORNELIUS: Yeah, that about wraps it up.

RED: That's nice. Friends are always good to have. I could use a friend right now. Preferably one who's good at directions.

JACK: Oh, my. Are you lost, young cowgirl?

RED: Seems that way.

JACK: Well, my name's Jack and I would love to help you find your way.

RED: Thank you so much. I really need to get to my Gran's house. You see, she's very ill and I'm taking some of my papa's spicy beef jerky to her so that it can clear up her sinuses. She has a head cold.

JACK: Head colds are bad.

CORNELIUS: The worst.

RED: I know. So, you see how important it is that I get this to her.

JACK: Absolutely. Wait a minute! I have an idea. Why don't you let me take the beef jerky to her—that way, there's no risk in you becoming more lost than you already are. I'd hate for you to get stuck out here. Who knows what kind of animals lurk behind the tumbleweed. So, what do you say?

RED: I think I better take it.

JACK: I said let me do it! *(Grabs for the basket, but RED is too fast.)*

RED: *(Unsure now.)* Seriously, I appreciate you trying to help, but all I need is directions and I'll be just fine.

JACK: Of course. I don't know what got into me. Tell me, where does your gran live?

CORNELIUS: I wouldn't tell him if I were you.

JACK: What did you say?

CORNELIUS: I said... I would give him very specific directions. Maybe draw a map, with colorful trails looping up and down, leading to a giant X. That's what I would do.

RED: *(Pause. To CORNELIUS.)* Are you okay?

CORNELIUS: You mean, frightened? Terrified? Nope, not me. I'm good.

RED: You sure?

JACK: He's very sure. Now, tell me, where do you need to go?

RED: She lives on twenty-six Jacob Lane. On the corner of Wilhelm Road.

CORNELIUS: Wow, you got that out of her easy. Trusting, isn't she?

JACK: Pipe down! *(To RED.)* Oh, yes, I know where that is. You just follow this trail for about a mile, then take the left trail east. That will be the fastest way to get there.

CORNELIUS: Actually, if I may interject, the right lane going west would be much faster.

RED: Really?

CORNELIUS: Absolutely.

JACK: What are you doing?

CORNELIUS: Helping.

JACK: She doesn't need your help, she needs mine. And if you know what's good for you, you'll close your mouth and let *me* do the helping. Ya get me? *(He shows CORNELIUS a glimpse of his slingshot.)*

CORNELIUS: Yup, I get ya. Loud and clear.

RED: Listen, you two. I didn't mean to start an argument. Why don't I share some of my papa's spicy beef jerky. Would that ease the tension?

JACK: You mean it?

RED: *(Setting the basket down to her side, opposite of JACK.)* Sure, I do. *(She reaches into the basket.)* I hate to break up what is obviously a wonderful—*(From the basket, she quickly pulls out her slingshot and turns, aiming directly at JACK. But JACK is quick. He, too, has his slingshot aimed, and it's right at CORNELIUS.)*—friendship.

JACK: Well, well, well, cowgirl. You're fast. But not fast enough.

RED: Let him go.

CORNELIUS: Now *that* is a great idea!

JACK: No, it's not!

CORNELIUS: But he does present a valid argument.

RED: What do you want?

JACK: I want that beef jerky.

RED: Not going to happen. It belongs to my Gran. *(Beat.)* So, what now? Do we all just stand here and continue to aim our weapons at one another?

CORNELIUS: For the record, I don't actually have a weapon, which seems a bit unfair to me.

JACK: I can stand here all day. *(Long pause.)* Okay, maybe not all day, but a good portion of it.

RED: Or we can put our weapons down and go our separate ways. No need to make this carry on all day.

CORNELIUS: *(To JACK.)* She sounds very smart. What do you say?

JACK: *(After a moment, he gets an idea.)* Fine. *(They both carefully put their slingshots down.)* I've got another idea anyway.

RED: What idea?

JACK: Well, uhm, another idea... which involves going home to relax and leaving you and your beef jerky alone forever.

RED: That sounds more like it.

JACK: Off I go. *(He begins to go in the direction of GRAN'S house.)*

RED: Wait a minute! Why are you going towards my Gran's house?

JACK: Okay, let's make something clear. Your Gran isn't the only one who lives in that direction. There's quite a nice housing development going up right now. That side of the desert is really expanding. Lots of people live there. And I just happen to be one of them.

RED: *(Reluctantly.)* Okay. Go ahead. But you better not follow the trail to my Gran's house.

JACK: Who, me? Of course not. Why would I do something like that? I'll just take the trail that heads in the direction of *my* house. *(Pause.)* Okay, then... see ya, cowgirl and rabbit. *(Exits down the trail to GRAN'S house.)*

CORNELIUS: It's cottontail! But... he's gone, so who cares.

RED: What's your name?

CORNELIUS: Cornelius Cottontail.

RED: Nice to meet you, Cornelius. My name is Red.

CORNELIUS: Thanks for your help. You're really good with that slingshot.

RED: Well, I'm fast.

CORNELIUS: Well, being fast is half the battle. Isn't that what they say? Somewhere?

RED: I've never heard anyone say that, but I'm sure they do. Somewhere. What did he want from you? (*CORNELIUS reaches into his bag and pulls out a can.*) What's that? A can of carrots?

CORNELIUS: Nope.

RED: Peas?

CORNELIUS: Wrong again.

RED: Corn?

CORNELIUS: Way off!

RED: What then?

CORNELIUS: Beans!

RED: I didn't know Cottontail Rabbits ate beans.

CORNELIUS: Well, we don't... yet. But as soon as I get these cans open, I will.

RED: Cans? You got more?

CORNELIUS: I got a whole bag full. (*He pulls out a few and hands them to RED.*)

RED: Wow! That's a lot of beans.

CORNELIUS: Yeah, well it doesn't matter much unless I can get them all open.

RED: Have you tried banging a rock against them?

CORNELIUS: I've tried every size rock. I've tried banging them against the ground, throwing them against a cactus, I even climbed that tall tree over there and let it drop all the way down to see if the impact would open it.

RED: Didn't work, huh?

CORNELIUS: Never does. And I'm beginning to think it never will.

RED: I'm sorry to hear that. Well, I better go. I need to get this beef jerky to my Gran's house. Just keep trying. I'm sure you'll get them open.

CORNELIUS: I sure do hope so. Be careful out here. Spend too much time in the Grimms Desert, you can go a little crazy.

RED: I've got plenty of water, I should be fine. You take care of yourself.

CORNELIUS: Oh, this is where I live. I'm used to the heat. The most it ever does to me is gets me a little moody at times. I get kinda disagreeable.

RED: Well, I better leave before I get on your bad side. Nice to meet you, Cornelius Cottontail.

CORNELIUS: Nice to meet you, Red.

RED begins to exit. CORNELIUS pulls out the rock from earlier and starts hitting the can over and over. RED stops and turns to watch him. CORNELIUS accidentally hits his fingers.

CORNELIUS: Ow! *(Sighs. Then continues to hit the can.)*

RED: Hey, you know what would open that much easier?

CORNELIUS: What?

RED: A can opener.

CORNELIUS: No way. Can openers are just a myth. A legend. They don't really exist.

RED: My Gran has two of them.

CORNELIUS: No!

RED: Yes!

CORNELIUS: No!

RED: Yes!

CORNELIUS: Please take me with you?!!

RED: Only if you share some of those beans with my Gran and I.

CORNELIUS: Are you kidding? Beans and beef jerky? Together? Yes, please!

RED: Perfect. Let's follow that trail to my Gran's house. *(Exits.)*

CORNELIUS: *(Chuckles.)* Two can openers? I have to see this to believe it! *(He starts banging the rock against the can again. Then...)* Ow!!!

Exits. Blackout.

SCENE 3

AT START: *In the blackout we hear COWBOY SAM.*

SAM: And there we were, face to face, just the two of us!

Lights up. We are at GRAN'S house. GRAN—who is visibly not feeling too well—is sitting at the dining room table, blanket over her shoulders, listening to SAM, who is enthusiastically acting out his story.

SAM: Now it was a known fact that Cowboy Jeff was the fastest slingshot-slinger in the old west. But a new cowboy had drifted into town. And can you guess who that cowboy was?

GRAN: You?

SAM: That's right, me! Cowboy Sam! And I had something to prove. I believed I was the fastest slingshot-slinger in the old west, and on that dusty street, I was going to prove it.

GRAN: Well, that is a wonderful story, Cowboy Sam, but I—

SAM: It was hot! Dangerously hot. Sweat poured down my face, into my right eye. So, I could only see out of my left eye as I searched for Cowboy Jeff. Where was he? I turned! And there he was... oh, but he was a smart fella. The sun was on his back, which meant it was right in my eyes—my left eye to be exact, rendering me blind—my right eye by the sweat, and my left eye by the blaring sun.

GRAN: Wow, I would love to know what happens next, but I think it's time to—

SAM: I said, "Cowboy Jeff! I know you're there, standing directly in front of me. And if you think a little blindness is going to stop me, then you got another thing comin'." I said, "Draw!" And we both went for our slingshots—well, I *assume* he went for his, I couldn't see nothin' so I'm just speculatin'. But next thing you know, I hear him scream, "Ow!" and it was followed by a loud thud. I came out victorious that day, and ever since then, I have been considered widely throughout Grimms County as the fastest slingshot slinger in the old west.

GRAN: (*Beat.*) That's great, Sam, but I'm not feeling too well, so I really need to get some rest.

SAM: Oh, okay. I didn't know you weren't feeling well.

GRAN: Well, how could you. I only told you eight times since you've been here.

SAM: No need to apologize, Gran.

GRAN: You're right, no need to, so I won't. (*Walking him to the door.*) You're always such... *exciting* company Sam, so thank you for stopping by.

SAM: Wait a minute! Do you need something from Grimms Shop? I can make a trip into town and get you some soup and crackers?

GRAN: That's sweet of you, Sam, but no thank you.

SAM: You know, that reminds me of the time I walked into Grimms shop right in the middle of a hold-up. Did I ever tell you that story?

GRAN: More than once, Sam—

SAM: I walked in and there was this outlaw with his slingshot out, pointing right at the shopkeeper. And there was no way I was about to—

GRAN: *Let that happen*, yes, I know, I've heard that story, Sam.

SAM: So, I pulled out my slingshot—

GRAN: Sam! You truly are a sweet cowboy, but if I hear another one of your stories right now, I may have to call the authorities on you for trespassing... and I don't want to do that.

SAM: Oh, sorry, Gran. I don't mean to go on and on every time.

GRAN: I know, Sam. You never do. But still, it seems to happen every time.

SAM: Okay, then, I'll let you rest.

POSTMAN enters, holding a handful of letters.

POSTMAN: Got some mail for you.

SAM quickly turns and pulls his slingshot on the POSTMAN, who throws his hands up high, causing the mail to fly everywhere.

POSTMAN: Please don't shoot! I'm just delivering the mail!

GRAN: Sam. He's just the Postman. Put that down.

SAM: Are you sure?

GRAN: I'm very sure. (*To POSTMAN.*) I am so sorry for Sam here. He means well. Always trying to protect me.

POSTMAN: (*Going down to pick up mail.*) Well, no problem. It's already happened once this week, so I'm a bit on edge, I guess. (*SAM is still aiming slingshot at POSTMAN.*) Do you think he could maybe point that in the other direction?

GRAN: Sam. (*SAM reluctantly puts down his slingshot. To POSTMAN.*) What have you got for me?

POSTMAN: Well, let's see... here it is. (*Hands GRAN a letter.*)

GRAN: Oh, how wonderful. It's from my son and granddaughter, Red. (*She opens the letter and reads.*)

SAM: (*To POSTMAN.*) I'm sorry about what just happened. I've been through so many skirmishes in my day that sometimes I just react before I think.

POSTMAN: Oh, it's okay. Like I said, I'm a bit on edge anyway.

GRAN: This is odd.

SAM: What is?

GRAN: I already know Red is traveling here to bring me some spicy beef jerky—my son's spicy beef jerky always clears up my sinuses—but here is *another* letter from Red saying the same thing.

SAM: Maybe she just forgot that they told you already.

GRAN: No, I was practically in the same room with them when it was decided for her to come. That's odd...

SAM: It is odd. It reminds me of the time I got this anonymous letter challenging me to a duel. One of the best duels of my life! Wanna hear about it? (*Pause.*)

POSTMAN: Well, I better get going.

GRAN: Thank you for the letter.

SAM: Are you sure you don't want to hear it? It involves a cowboy and an outlaw, two slingshots, and a bucket of horse manure. (*Beat.*) Manure means poop.

POSTMAN: Yeah, I know what manure means.

SAM: You just seemed a little confused, so I thought I'd—

POSTMAN: I know what manure means, and as much as I would really love to hear about it, I just don't have the time right now. Mail to deliver.

SAM: That's okay. I'll come with you. Tell you all about it.

POSTMAN: That's okay, I know you're busy—

SAM: No, I'm not. Let's go. *(They begin to exit. SAM stops and turns to GRAN.)* And don't worry, I'll keep an eye out for Red. She may need some protection out there in the Grimms Desert. You know that heat can make you go a little crazy.

GRAN: Thank you, Sam. But she's good with a slingshot, so I think she can handle herself. And she knows to bring plenty of water. She's a smart girl.

SAM: Oh yeah? Good to know. But don't worry, I'll be looking out for her.

GRAN: Not worried.

SAM: *(To POSTMAN.)* You ready?

POSTMAN: Listen, I really don't think you need to come with me.

SAM: And have you miss out on one of the best slingshot slinging tales you've ever heard? No way! *(As they exit.)* So, before I get to the horse manure, there was this anonymous letter I was telling you about... *(POSTMAN and SAM exit.)*

GRAN crosses to the table, removes her blanket from the back of the chair, wraps herself in it, and has a seat. She looks at the letter from RED for a moment. There's a knock at the door.

GRAN: Who is it?

JACK: *(Giving a bad impression of RED.)* It's me, Granny.

GRAN: Who?

JACK: *(His own voice.)* Me, Red. *(Clearing throat, back to impression.)* I mean... me, Red.

GRAN: Red? It doesn't sound like you.

JACK: That's funny, because it is me, so open the door right now and let me in. I've got some of my famous spicy beef jerky for you.

GRAN: Your famous beef jerky? Don't you mean, your Papa's beef jerky?

JACK: Yes! Yes, that's what I meant. What you just said is what I meant to say as opposed to what I actually said. *(Pause.)* Now let me in!

GRAN: *(Looks at the letter, then back at the door.)* Okay. I'll be right there. Give me a second.

JACK: Of course, but don't take too long. It's really... *cold* out here.

GRAN: Cold? It's 105 degrees today.

JACK: Uh... well... yes, but it's a *cool* 105.

GRAN: Okay, I'm coming.

GRAN goes to her book, which is sitting on the table and opens it. The inside is hollowed out, and in the place of the pages, is a slingshot. She pulls it out, dims the lights, and hides underneath the table.

JACK: Gran, I'm getting really impatient out here. Can you pretty please with sugar on top let me in.

GRAN: Go ahead and come in, *Red*.

JACK slowly enters. He looks around.

JACK: Gran? Why is it so dark in here? Gran? Where are you, Gran? I have traveled so far though the Grimms Desert to help you feel better. *(He is getting impatient.)* Gran?! Seriously, Gran, it's time you come out!

GRAN, who the audience can still see under the table, pulls back her slingshot and lets go. It hits JACK right in the bottom.

JACK: Ow! Hey, that hurt! *(She pulls back again and lets go of another. Again, right in the bottom.)* Ow! Stop that! How could you hurt your poor little defenseless granddaughter?

GRAN: Easy. *(Lets go of another.)*

JACK: Ow! Okay, no more Mr. Nice Coyote! *(Begins to walk towards the table.)* Come out, come out, wherever you are.

JACK slowly walks around to the other side of the table. GRAN takes this opportunity to crawl out from underneath the table and across the room towards the front door. JACK turns and sees her.

JACK: Stop right there!

GRAN stops and stands. She flings her blanket off her shoulders (Action-movie style.) and points her slingshot right at JACK. JACK puts his hands up.

JACK: Now, hold on a minute. Why are you so jumpy?

GRAN: What do you want?

JACK: I just wanted to stop and see if you were feeling better.

GRAN: Is that why you sent that letter? To try and fool me?

JACK: How did you know it was from me?

GRAN: For one, Red already sent me a letter telling me she was coming. Two, it wasn't in her handwriting. And three, that had to be the *worst* impression of Red I have ever heard!

JACK: *(This upsets JACK.)* Now you're just plain being mean. I worked hard on that impression.

GRAN: Apparently not hard enough.

GRAN shoots her slingshot. JACK dodges. A good ole' fashion shoot-out begins (The slingshot version, of course.) They take turns shooting and dodging. [NOTE: They can even take the shoot-out into the audience, ad-libbing some, so as to not make it scary at all. JACK can hide behind audience members, also chatting with them as he does so.] At some point, GRAN runs back on stage.

GRAN: Well, this is where the shoot-out ends.

JACK: Oh, c'mon, this was just getting fun.

GRAN: Then we'll just have to continue this later. *(She shoots one more time, then runs offstage.)*

JACK: Wait! *(But she is gone.)* Oh! For an old woman, she is much quicker than you would think. Well, no matter. She's gone. That's all I needed. *(He picks up GRAN'S blanket and wraps it around his shoulders. He sits at the table and covers his head with the top of the blanket.)* Now all I need to do is wait. Just... patiently... wait. I've got all the patience in the world. Patience is my middle name. *(Pause. Sighs.)* This is taking forever!

Blackout.

SCENE 4

AT START: *Lights up. We are in the Grimms Desert. Offstage we hear...*

CORNELIUS: Ow! (*RED and CORNELIUS enter.*) I'm never going to get this thing open.

RED: You have no patience, do you?

CORNELIUS: Yes, I do. (*Banging on the can.*) I have lots of patience!

RED: Then I must have the meaning of that word all wrong. (*Looks around.*) This looks like a good spot to take a break. I need to practice my slingshot anyway.

CORNELIUS: Sounds good to me. My feet are killing me. (*Sits down upstage.*)

RED: (*Pulling out empty soda cans.*) I use these to practice. (*Carries them upstage and sets them down on a rock, right next to where CORNELIUS is sitting.*) This is perfect.

CORNELIUS: You just shoot at empty cans?

RED: Yeah, it helps me practice my aim.

CORNELIUS: Yeah, you should probably get better at that. I feel like that's an important part of slinging a slingshot. But what do I know?

RED finishes placing the cans on the rock and crosses downstage. She turns and pulls out her slingshot and aims at the cans.

CORNELIUS: So, how is your aim?

RED: (*Pulls back on the slingshot.*) Horrible.

She lets go of the slingshot. We hear it ricochet just about everywhere. CORNELIUS ducks.

CORNELIUS: Aaahh! Give a cottontail some warning, will you!

RED: Oh, yeah. Sorry.

CORNELIUS: I thought you said you were good?

RED: No, I said I was fast.

CORNELIUS: Well, what's the point in being fast if you can't aim?

RED: Whatever happened to that whole being fast is half the battle, stuff?

CORNELIUS: Yeah, *half* the battle. I'd like to win the *whole* thing. Okay, let's try again. (*RED pulls back on her slingshot. CORNELIUS quickly moves out of the way.*) With me over here this time.

RED: I always have trouble focusing. My dad always tells me to—

PAPA: (*Enters.*) Focus.

RED: Yes, I know. Just... (*Together.*) focus.

PAPA: (*Together.*) Focus. (*He is moving closer to RED.*) Focus.

RED: Got it, Papa.

CORNELIUS: (*Confused.*) What?

PAPA: You must be one with the target.

RED: Yes, I know, Papa.

CORNELIUS: You know I'm not your papa, right?

RED: Yes, I know.

CORNELIUS: Then who are you talking to?

RED: My papa.

CORNELIUS: (*Looking around, but he cannot see him.*) O... kay.

PAPA: You need to gain that confidence, Red.

RED: I know, Papa.

CORNELIUS: Red, your papa isn't here.

RED: Yes he is. Well, not really, but he is to me.

CORNELIUS: Got it. That makes sense. Oh wait... no it doesn't!

RED: Anytime I practice, I imagine him here, helping me, like he does back home. (*She pulls back on her slingshot again.*)

CORNELIUS: Does it work? (*She lets go and, once again, it ricochets all around them. Beat.*) Nope.

RED: Okay, Papa. It's time for you to go.

PAPA: But I'm here to help, Red.

RED: I know, and I love you for that, but really, you're just in my head and it's obviously not working.

PAPA: But—

RED: Bye, Papa. I'll see you again soon.

PAPA: (*Exhales.*) Oh, alright. If you need me, just call... or... you know, *imagine*... me? (*Beat.*) You know what I mean. (*Exits.*)

RED: *(Looks at CORNELIUS, who is staring at her like she may be crazy.)* You ready?

CORNELIUS: Is he, uh... gone?

RED: Yes, he's gone.

CORNELIUS: Great. *(Teasing.)* And he didn't even say goodbye.

RED: *(Looks at him, concerned.)* Cornelius? You know my Papa wasn't really here, right? *(Exits.)*

CORNELIUS: Uh... yes, I do know that. The question is do you? *(Exits.)*

GRAN enters. [Note: Every time GRAN enters in this scene, she becomes more and more confused, eventually arguing with herself.]

GRAN: Sam! Sam, where are you? *(She hears a noise.)* What was that? Sam, is that you? *(Pause.)* I must be going crazy out here. *(Exits.)*

Thank you for reading this free excerpt from:

***THE ROOTIN' TOOTIN' TALE
OF LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD***

By Stephen Frankenfield

For performance rights and/or a complete copy of the script, please
contact us at:

Heuer Publishing LLC

P.O. Box 248 • Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52406

Toll Free: 1-800-950-7529 • Fax (319) 368-8011

WWW.HEUERPUB.COM