

Chapter 11 A Surprise for Mrs Fox

The Small Fox ran back along the tunnel as fast as he could, carrying the three plump hens. He was exploding with joy, 'Just wait!' he kept thinking, 'just wait till Mummy sees these!' He had a long way to run but he never stopped once on the way and he came bursting in upon Mrs Fox. 'Mummy!' he cried, out of breath. 'Look, Mummy, look! Wake up and see what I've brought you!'

Mrs Fox, who was weaker than ever now from lack of food, opened one eye and looked at the hens. 'I'm dreaming,' she murmured and closed the eye again.

'You're not dreaming, Mummy! They're real chickens! We're saved! We're not going to starve!'

Mrs Fox opened both eyes and sat up quickly. 'But, my *dear* child!' she cried. 'Where on earth . . .?'

'Boggis's Chicken House Number One!' spluttered the Small Fox. 'We tunnelled right up under the floor and you've never seen so many big fat hens in all your life! And Dad said to prepare a feast! They'll be back soon!'

The sight of food seemed to give new strength to Mrs Fox. 'A feast it shall be!' she said, standing up. 'Oh, what a fantastic fox your father is! Hurry up, child, and start plucking those chickens!'

Far away down in the tunnel, the fantastic Mr Fox was saying, 'Now for the next bit, my darlings! This one'll be as easy as pie! All we have to do is dig another little tunnel from *here* to there!'

'To where Dad?'

'Don't ask so many questions. Start digging!'

Chapter 12 Badger

Mr Fox and the three remaining Small Foxes dug fast and straight. They were all too excited now to feel tired or hungry. They knew they were going to have a whacking great feast before long and the fact that it was none other than Boggis's chickens that they were going to eat made them churgle with laughter every time they thought of it. It was lovely to realise that while the fat farmer was sitting up there on the hill waiting for them to starve, he was also giving them their dinner without knowing it. 'Keep digging,' said Mr Fox. 'It's not much further.'

All of a sudden, a deep voice above their heads said, '*Who goes there?*' The foxes jumped. They looked up quickly and they saw, peering through a small hole in the roof of the tunnel, a long black pointed furry face.

'Badger!' cried Mr Fox.

'Foxy!' cried Badger. 'My goodness me, I'm glad I've found *someone* at last! I've been digging around in circles for three days and nights and I haven't the foggiest ideas where I am!'

Badger made the hole in the ceiling bigger and dropped down beside the foxes. A Small Badger (his son) dropped down after him. 'Haven't you *heard* what's happening up on the hill?' Badger said excitedly. 'It's chaos! Half the wood has disappeared and there are men with guns all over the countryside! None of us can get out, even at night! We're all starving to death!'

'Who is *we*?' asked Mr Fox.

'All us diggers. That's me and Mole and Rabbit and all our wives and children. Even Weasel, who can usually sneak out of the tightest spots, is right now hiding down my hole with Mrs Weasel and six kids. What on earth are we going to do, Foxy? I think we're finished!'

Mr Fox looked at his three children and he smiled. The children smiled back at him, sharing his secret. 'My dear old Badger,' he said, 'this mess you're in is all my fault . . .'

'I *know* it's your fault!' said Badger furiously. 'And the farmers are not going to

give up till they've got you. Unfortunately, that means *us* as well. It means everyone on the hill.' Badger sat down and put a paw around his small son. 'We're done for,' he said softly. 'My poor wife up there is so weak she can't dig another yard.'

'Nor can mine,' said Mr Fox. 'And yet at this very minute she is preparing for me and my children the most delicious feast of plump juicy chickens . . .'

'Stop!' cried Badger. 'Don't tease me! I can't stand it!'

'It's true!' cried the Small Foxes. 'Dad's not teasing! We've got chickens galore!'

'And because everything is entirely my fault,' said Mr Fox, 'I invite *everyone* to share it - you and Mole and Rabbit and Weasel and all your wives and children. There'll be plenty to go around, I can assure you.'

'You mean it?' cried Badger. 'You *really mean* it?'

Mr Fox pushed his face close to Badger's and whispered darkly, 'Do *you know* where we've just been?'

'Where?'

'Right inside Boggis's Chicken House Number One!'

'No!'

'Yes! But that is nothing to where we are going now. You have come just at the right moment, my dear Badger. You can help us dig. And in the meanwhile, your small son can run back to Mrs Badger and all the others and spread the good news.' Mr Fox turned to the Small Badger and said, 'Tell them they are invited to a Fox's Feast. Then bring them all down here and follow this tunnel back until you find my home!'

'Yes, Mr Fox!' said the Small Badger. 'Yes, sir! Right away, sir! Oh, thank you, sir!' and he scrambled quickly back through the hole in the roof of the tunnel and disappeared.

Chapter 11 Question Sheet

How do you think the little fox is feeling when he returns home to give his mother the chickens?

'But, my *dear* child!' she cried. 'Where on earth...?'

Discuss the punctuation that Roald Dahl has used in this sentence.

- **Why has he used it?**
- **What effect does it have on the sentence if you read it out loud?**

Questions for Chapter 12

What do you think of the character of Badger?

How does Badger feel about Fox? Does his opinion change?

How would Badger say this sentence?

'You mean it?' cried Badger. 'You *really mean* it?'

What does it mean by 'Fox *whispered darkly*'?

Chapter 11 Answers

How do you think the little fox is feeling when he returns home to give his mother the chickens?

- *Any sensible response here, e.g. excited, relieved, proud*

'But, my *dear* child!' she cried. 'Where on earth...?'

Discuss the punctuation that Roald Dahl has used in this sentence.

- **Why has he used it?**
 - *Ellipses (...)* – used to show the character hasn't finished their sentence, but we know what they might say.
 - *Italics* – used to emphasis / lean on the word *dear*. So the mother fox is very caring.
 - *Exclamation mark* – to show the mother fox is shouting and surprised!
- **What effect does it have on the sentence if you read it out loud?**
 - *We stop reading out loud at the ellipses.*
 - *We lean on / emphasise the word 'dear'.*
 - *We shout the speech that is being said!*

Chapter 12 Answers

What do you think of the character of Badger?

- *Any sensible response here, as long as there are sensible reasons from the text.*

How does Badger feel about Fox? Does his opinion change?

- *He is furious / angry at first, because of Fox getting the animals into trouble, and the hunters coming to hunt them all. Then his opinion changes to that of being grateful / thankful for the delicious feast that Fox is promising.*

How would Badger say this sentence?

'You mean it?' cried Badger. 'You *really* mean it?'

- *He would perhaps say the second 'You really mean it?' louder than the first, as he gets more excited.*
- *He would lean on / emphasise the words 'really mean', to show he is finding it hard to believe.*
- *The word 'cried' shows us Badger might not be actually crying here, but saying it with emotion, shock and delight.*

What does it mean by 'Fox whispered darkly?'

- *He's being secretive; he's being careful about how loud he is saying it; the information he is telling Badger is big news, but must be treated carefully.*