

Roald Dahl's

FANTASTIC MR FOX



THE VERY CLEVER MR FOX!



Reading

Today you're going to read another 2 chapters from our story. Both chapters have terrible in the title...I wonder what that makes you think about what could happen next?



4

The Terrible Shovels

Down in the hole, Mrs Fox was tenderly licking the stump of Mr Fox's tail to stop the bleeding. 'It was the finest tail for miles around,' she said between licks.

'It hurts,' said Mr Fox.

'I know it does, sweetheart. But it'll soon get better.'

'And it will soon grow again, Dad,' said one of the Small Foxes.



'It will never grow again,' said Mr Fox. 'I shall be tail-less for the rest of my life.' He looked very glum.

There was no food for the foxes that night, and soon the children dozed off. Then Mrs Fox dozed off. But Mr Fox couldn't sleep because of the pain in the stump of his tail. 'Well,' he thought, 'I suppose I'm lucky to be alive at all. And now they've found our hole, we're going to have to move out as soon as possible. We'll never get any peace if we ... What was *that*?' He turned his head sharply and listened. The noise he heard now was the most frightening noise a fox can ever hear – the scrape-scrape-scraping of shovels digging into the soil.

'Wake up!' he shouted. 'They're digging us out!'

Mrs Fox was wide awake in one second. She sat up, quivering all over. 'Are you sure that's it?' she whispered.

'I'm positive! Listen!'

'They'll kill my children!' cried Mrs Fox.

'Never!' said Mr Fox.

'But, darling, they will!' sobbed Mrs Fox. 'You know they will!'

***Scrunch, scrunch, scrunch* went the shovels above their heads. Small stones and bits of earth began falling from the roof of the tunnel.**

'How will they kill us, Mummy?' asked one of the Small Foxes. His round black eyes were huge with fright. 'Will there be dogs?' he said.

Mrs Fox began to cry. She gathered her four children close to her and held them tight.

Suddenly there was an especially loud crunch above their heads and the sharp end of a shovel came right through the ceiling.



The sight of this awful thing seemed to have an electric effect upon Mr Fox. He jumped up and shouted, 'I've got it! Come on! There's not a moment to lose! Why didn't I think of it before!'

'Think of what, Dad?'

'A fox can dig quicker than a man!' shouted Mr Fox, beginning to dig. 'Nobody in the world can dig as quick as a fox!'

The soil began to fly out furiously behind Mr Fox as he started to dig for dear life with his front feet. Mrs Fox ran forward to help him. So did the four children.

'Go downwards!' ordered Mr Fox. 'We've got to go deep! As deep as we possibly can!'

The tunnel began to grow longer and longer. It sloped steeply downward. Deeper and deeper below the surface of the ground it went. The mother and the father and all four of the children were digging together. Their front legs were moving so fast you couldn't see them. And gradually the scrunching and scraping of the shovels became fainter and fainter.



After about an hour, Mr Fox stopped digging.

'Hold it!' he said. They all stopped. They turned and looked back up the long tunnel they had just dug. All was quiet. 'Phew!' said Mr Fox. 'I think we've done it! They'll never get as deep as this. Well done, everyone!'

They all sat down, panting for breath. And Mrs Fox said to her children, 'I should like you to know that if it wasn't for your father we should all be dead by now. Your father is a fantastic fox.'

Mr Fox looked at his wife and she smiled. He loved her more than ever when she said things like that.



5

The Terrible Tractors

As the sun rose the next morning, Boggis and Bunce and Bean were still digging. They had dug a hole so deep you could have put a house into it. But they had not yet come to the end of the foxes' tunnel. They were all very tired and cross.

'Dang and blast!' said Boggis. 'Whose rotten idea was this?'

'Bean's idea,' said Bunce.

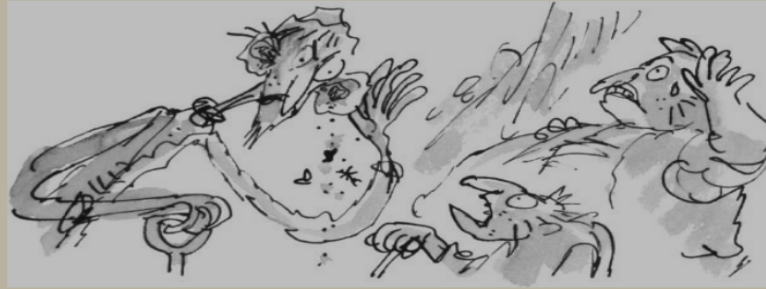
Boggis and Bunce both stared at Bean. Bean took another swig of cider, then put the flask back into his pocket without offering it to the others. 'Listen,' he said angrily, 'I want that fox! I'm going to get that fox! I'm not giving in till I've strung him up over my front porch, dead as a dumpling!'

'We can't get him by digging, that's for sure,' said the fat Boggis. 'I've had enough of digging.'

Bunce, the little pot-bellied dwarf, looked up at Bean and said, 'Have you got any more stupid ideas, then?'

'What?' said Bean. 'I can't hear you.' Bean never took a bath. He never even washed. As a result, his earholes were clogged with all kinds of muck and wax and bits of chewing-gum and dead flies and stuff like that. This

made him deaf. 'Speak louder,' he said to Bunce, and Bunce shouted back, 'Got any more stupid ideas?'



Bean rubbed the back of his neck with a dirty finger. He had a boil coming there and it itched. 'What we need on this job,' he said, 'is machines ... *mechanical* shovels. We'll have him out in five minutes with *mechanical* shovels.'

This was a pretty good idea and the other two had to admit it.

'All right then,' Bean said, taking charge. 'Boggis, you stay here and see the fox doesn't escape. Bunce and I will go and fetch our machinery. If he tries to get out, shoot him quick.'

The long, thin Bean walked away. The tiny Bunce trotted after him. The fat Boggis stayed where he was with his gun pointing at the fox-hole.

Soon, two enormous caterpillar tractors with mechanical shovels on their front ends came clanking into the wood. Bean was driving one, Bunce the other. The machines were both black. They were murderous, brutal-looking monsters.

'Here we go, then!' shouted Bean.

'Death to the fox!' shouted Bunce.

The machines went to work, biting huge mouthfuls of soil out of the hill. The big tree under which Mr Fox had dug his hole in the first place was toppled like a matchstick. On all sides, rocks were sent flying and trees were falling and the noise was deafening.



Down in the tunnel the foxes crouched, listening to the terrible clanging and banging overhead.

'What's happening, Dad?' cried the Small Foxes. 'What are they doing?'

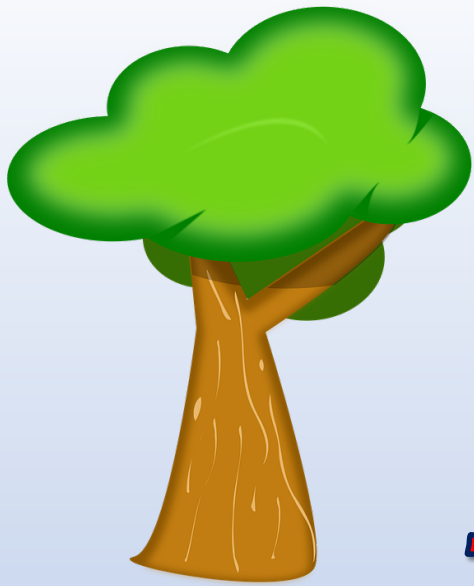
Mr Fox didn't know what was happening or what they were doing.

'It's an earthquake!' cried Mrs Fox.

'Look!' said one of the Small Foxes. 'Our tunnel's got shorter! I can see daylight!'

They all looked round, and yes, the mouth of the tunnel was only a few feet away from them now, and in the circle of daylight beyond they could see the two huge black tractors almost on top of them.

'Tractors!' shouted Mr Fox. 'And *mechanical* shovels! Dig for your lives! *Dig, dig, dig!*'



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What happens next?

One thing I love about Roald Dahl's books are the illustrations by the illustrator Quentin Blake.

For your last task today, decide what you think happens next. Rather than writing I want you to draw the illustrations that would go with it. Even if you know what's next, you can invent a completely different idea if you like.

