

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!"