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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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## Old Granny Fox: Reddy Fox Is Impudent (10/29)

A saucy tongue is dangerous to possess;  
Be sure some day 't will get you in a mess.

—Old Granny Fox.

Reddy Fox is headstrong and, like most headstrong people, is given to thinking that his way is the best way just because it is his way. He is smart, is Reddy Fox.

Yes, indeed, Reddy Fox is very, very smart. He has to be in order to live. But a great deal of what he knows he learned from Old Granny Fox. The very best tricks he knows she taught him. She began teaching him when he was so little that he tumbled over his own feet. It was she who taught him how to hunt, that it is better never to steal chickens near home but to go a long way off for them, and how to fool Bowser the Hound.

It was Granny who taught Reddy how to use his little black nose to follow the tracks of careless young Rabbits, and how to catch Meadow Mice under the snow. In fact, there is little Reddy knows which he didn't learn from wise, shrewd Old Granny Fox.

But as he grew bigger and bigger, until he was quite as big as Granny herself, he forgot what he owed to her. He grew to have a very good opinion of himself and to feel that he knew just about all there was to know. So sometimes when he had done foolish or careless things

and Granny had scolded him, telling him he was big enough and old enough to know better, he would sulk and go off muttering to himself. But he never quite dared to be openly disrespectful to Granny, and this, of course, was quite as it should have been.

“If only I could catch Granny doing something foolish or careless,” he would say to himself. But he never could, and he had begun to think that he never would. But now at last Granny, clever Old Granny Fox, had been careless! She had allowed Farmer Brown’s boy to catch her napping! Reddy did wish he had been there to see it himself. But anyway, he had been told about it, and he made up his mind that the next time Granny said



anything sharp to him about his carelessness he would have something to say back. Yes, Sir, Reddy Fox was deliberately planning to answer back, which, as you know, is always disrespectful to one’s elders.

At last the chance came.

Reddy did a thing no truly wise Fox ever will do. He went two nights in succession to the

same henhouse, and the second time he barely escaped being shot. Old Granny Fox found out about it. How she found out Reddy doesn’t know to this day, but find out she did, and she gave him such a scolding as even her sharp tongue had seldom given him.

"You are the stupidest Fox I ever heard of," scolded Granny.

"I'm no more stupid than you are!" retorted Reddy in the most impudent way.

"What's that?" demanded Granny. "What's that you said?"

"I said I'm no more stupid than you are, and what is more, I hope I'm not so stupid. I know better than to take a nap in broad daylight right under the very nose of Farmer Brown's boy." Reddy grinned in the most impudent way as he said this.

Granny's eyes snapped. Then things happened. Reddy was cuffed this way and cuffed that way and cuffed the other way until it seemed to him that the air was full of black paws, every one of which landed on his head or face with a sting that made him whimper and put his tail between his legs, and finally howl.

"There!" cried Granny, when at last she had to stop because she was quite out of breath. "Perhaps that will teach you to be respectful to your elders.

I was careless and stupid, and I am perfectly ready to admit it, because it has taught me a lesson. Wisdom often is gained through mistakes, but never when one is not willing to admit the mistakes. No Fox lives long who makes the same mistake twice. And those who are impudent to their elders come to no good end. I've got a fat goose hidden away for dinner, but you will get none of it."

"I—I wish I'd never heard of Granny's mistake," whined Reddy to himself as he crept dinnerless to bed.

"You ought to wish that you hadn't been impudent," whispered a small voice down inside him.