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## How Mr. Fox Got His Dinner

*Abbie Phillips Walker*

Mr. Fox had not been able to get anything to eat for several days—that is, anything he particularly liked, and what he particularly liked was nice fat turkeys.

The farmer over the hill kept his poultry-house door locked fast, and all of Mr. Fox's well-laid plans had failed to unfasten the door or get near the barnyard in the daytime, for Rover, the farmer's dog, kept his eyes and ears open, and as soon as Mr. Fox poked his nose around the barnyard fence, Rover dashed after him, calling the farmer with a loud bark.

Mr. Fox had some very narrow escapes, and now he set to work thinking how he could carry out his plans by a clever trick.

One morning when he was going home hungry and tired, he came across a muzzle which some dog had lost lying in his path.

Mr. Fox picked it up, and as he walked along, a thought came to him which made him smile. "The very thing," he said, putting on the muzzle and fastening it in place.

Then Mr. Fox ran all the way to the farm over the hill, but he did not go near the barnyard. He stretched himself out by a rock down the road and waited.

Pretty soon, along came Mrs. Turkey and her little ones, and when she saw Mr. Fox, she started to run, but seeing he was muzzled, she went back, for Mrs. Turkey was very inquisitive and she knew something unusual must have happened to Mr. Fox. Mr. Fox looked very sad, so Mrs. Turkey asked him what was the matter.

"Oh, I have a great sorrow, Mrs. Turkey," said Mr. Fox. "And I expect you will not give me any sympathy when you hear all about it, but I am resigned to my fate and shall try to bear it."

"Why, what has happened to you, Mr. Fox?" asked Mrs. Turkey, venturing very close to him. "Do tell me your troubles. I am sure I will sympathize with you."

"Oh, Mrs. Turkey, how would you feel to have to wear this awful thing over your face so you could not eat?" asked Mr. Fox.



"Can't you eat anything, Mr. Fox?" asked Mrs. Turkey. "Not even soup? Oh yes, I can eat soup, Mrs. Turkey," said Mr. Fox, "but I cannot eat anything big or solid. All I can do is drink. See how thin I am. Oh dear! oh dear! it is terrible; and that is not all of my trouble, either."

"What else has befallen you, Mr. Fox?" asked Mrs. Turkey, really quite sorry for him now.

"I have to carry about on my back anyone who wishes to ride," said Mr. Fox, "as long as I wear this muzzle."

"Can't you take it off?" asked Mrs. Turkey, taking a few steps away.

"No, indeed. I have to wear it until the cruel man who put it on thinks I have been punished enough," said Mr. Fox, "and all I did was to walk around his barnyard one night just for exercise. Wouldn't you like to take a ride, Mrs. Turkey? I might just as well be carrying you as anyone."

Mrs. Turkey looked at Mr. Fox, but he looked so uncomfortable and unhappy that she felt sure he was telling the truth; so she told her little turkeys to stand very still, and she hopped on Mr. Fox's back.

Off he trotted down the road, and as it was the little turkeys he was after, he brought her back safe and sound.

"Oh, mother, we want to ride, too," cried all the little turkeys. "Give us a ride, too, Mr. Fox."

"I am afraid you are too young," said Mr. Fox. "You do not know how to balance yourselves as your mother does. No, I guess you better not ride."

"Oh, I am sure they will be perfectly safe," said Mrs. Turkey. "Do take them, Mr. Fox. I will tell them to hold on tight."

"Well, if you insist," said sly Mr. Fox, trying to look very sad. "I promise you I will be careful."

So on hopped the little turkey chicks, and Mrs. Turkey told them to cling fast to Mr. Fox's fur.

Off trotted Mr. Fox, going slowly at first, but as soon as he was down the road far enough from Mrs. Turkey, he started to run.

Into the woods he went and out of sight, and poor Mrs. Turkey waited until sundown for him to return; then she knew it was only another of Mr. Fox's clever tricks to get a good dinner, and that he had carried off the little turkey chicks to his cave in the woods.

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