

Reddy Fox Goes Fishing
by Thornton W. Burgess

One morning when Mr. Sun was very, very bright and it was very, very warm, down on the Green Meadows Reddy Fox came hopping and skipping down the Lone Little Path that leads to the Laughing Brook. Hoppity, skip, skippity hop! Reddy felt very much pleased with himself that sunny morning. Pretty soon he saw Johnny Chuck sitting up very straight close by the little house where he lives.

“Johnny Chuck, Chuck, Chuck! Johnny Chuck, Chuck, Chuck! Johnny Woodchuck!” called Reddy fox.

Johnny Chuck pretended not to hear. His mother had told him not to play with Reddy Fox, for Reddy Fox was a bad boy.

“Johnny Chuck, Chuck, Chuck! Johnny Woodchuck!” called Reddy again.

This time Johnny turned and looked. He could see Reddy Fox turning somersaults and chasing his tail and rolling over and over in the little path.

“Come on!” said Reddy Fox. “Let's go fishing!”

“Can't,” said Johnny Chuck, because you know, his mother had told him not to play with Reddy Fox.

“I'll show you how to catch a fish,” said Reddy Fox, and tried to jump over his own shadow.

“Can't,” said good little Johnny Chuck again, and turned away so that he couldn't see Reddy Fox chasing Butterflies and playing catch with Field Mice children.

So Reddy Fox went down to the Laughing Brook all alone. The Brook was laughing and singing on its way to join the Big River. The sky was blue and the sun was bright. Reddy Fox jumped on the Big Rock in the middle of the Laughing Brook and peeped over the other side. What do you think he saw? Why, right down below in a Dear Little Pool were Mr. And Mrs. Trout and all the little Trouts.

Reddy Fox wanted some of those little Trouts to take home for his dinner, but he didn't know how to catch them. He lay flat down on the Big Rock and reached way down into the Dear Little Pool, but all the little Trouts laughed at Reddy Fox and not one came within reach. Then Mr. Trout swam up so quickly that Reddy Fox didn't see him coming and bit Reddy's little black paw hard.

“Ouch!” cried Reddy Fox, pulling his little black paw out of the water. And all the little Trouts laughed at Reddy Fox.

Just then along came Billy Mink.

“Hello, Reddy Fox!” said Billy Mink. “What are you doing here?”

“I'm trying to catch a fish,” said Reddy Fox.

“Pooh! That's easy!” said Billy Mink. “I'll show you how.”

So Billy Mink lay down on the Big Rock side of Reddy Fox and peeped over into the Dear Little Pool

where all the little Trouts were laughing at Reddy Fox and having such a good time. But Billy Mink took care, such very great care, that Mr. Trout and Mrs. Trout should not see him peeping over into the Dear Little Pool.

When Billy Mink saw all those little Trouts playing in the Dear Little Pool he laughed. “You count three, Reddy Fox,” said he, “and I’ll show you how to catch a fish.”

“One!” said Reddy Fox, “Two! Three!”

Splash! Billy Mink had dived head first into the Dear Little Pool. He splattered water way up onto Reddy Fox, and he frightened old Mr. Frog so that he fell over backwards off the lily pad where he was taking a morning nap right into the water. In a minute Billy Mink climbed out on the other side of the Dear Little Pool and sure enough, he had caught one of the little Trouts.

“Give it to me,” cried Reddy Fox.

“Catch one yourself,” said Billy Mink. “Old Grandpa Mink wants a fish for his dinner, so I am going to take this home. You’re afraid, Reddy Fox! ‘Fraid-cat! Fraid-cat!”

Billy Mink shook the water off of his little brown coat, picked up the little Trout and ran off home.

Reddy Fox lay down again on the Big Rock and peeped into the Dear Little Pool. Not a single Trout could he see. They were all hiding safely with Mr. and Mrs. Trout. Reddy Fox watched and watched. The sun was warm, the Laughing Brook was singing a lullaby and—what do you think? Why, Reddy Fox went fast asleep on the edge of the great Big Rock.

By and by Reddy Fox began to dream. He dreamed that he had a nice little brown coat that was waterproof, just like the little brown coat that Billy Mink wore. Yes, and he dreamed that he had learned to swim and to catch fish just as Billy Mink did. He dreamed that the Dear Little Pool was full of little Trouts and that he was just going to catch one when—splash! Reddy Fox had rolled right off of the Big Rock into the Dear Little Pool.

The water went into the eyes of Reddy Fox, and it went up his nose and he swallowed so much that he felt as if he never, never would want another drink of water. And his beautiful red coat, which old Mother Fox had told him to be very, very careful of because he couldn’t have another for a whole year, was oh so wet! And his pants were wet and his beautiful bushy tail, of which he was so proud, was so full of water that he couldn’t hold it up, but had to drag it up the bank after him as he crawled out of the Dear Little Pool.

“Ha! Ha! Ha!” laughed Mr. Kingfisher, sitting on a tree.

“Ho! Ho! Ho!” laughed old Mr. Frog, who had climbed back on his lily pad.

“He! He! He!” laughed all the little Trouts and Mr. Trout and Mrs. Trout, swimming round and round in the Dear Little Pool.

“Ha! Ha! Ha! Ho! Ho! Ho! He! He! He!” laughed Billy Mink, who had come back to the Big Rock just in time to see Reddy Fox tumble in.

Reddy Fox didn't say a word, he was so ashamed. He just crept up the Lone Little Path to his home, dragging his tail, all wet and muddy, behind him, and dripping water all the way.

Johnny Chuck was still sitting by his door as his mother had told him to. Reddy Fox tried to go past without being seen, but Johnny Chuck's bright little eyes saw him.

“Where are your fish, Reddy Fox?” called Johnny Chuck.

“Why don't you turn somersaults, and jump over your shadow and chase Butterflies and play with the little Field Mice, Reddy Fox?” called Johnny Chuck.

But Reddy Fox just walked faster. When he got almost home he saw old Mother Fox sitting in the doorway with a great big switch across her lap, for Mother Fox had told Reddy Fox not to go near the Laughing Brook.

And this is all I am going to tell you about how Reddy Fox went fishing.

Source:

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