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Dramatic Publishing

FANTASTIC MR. FOX

ROALD DAHL'S
FANTASY ADVENTURE
FOR CHILDREN

DRAMATIZED BY
SALLY REID



THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY

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FANTASTIC MR. FOX
A Fantasy Adventure
For a Large Flexible Cast

CHARACTERS

MR. FOX	MRS. FOX
BADGER	MRS. BADGER
BOGGIS	BUNCE
BEAN	MRS. BEAN (voice)
FOUR SMALL FOXES	MOLE
FOUR SMALL BADGERS	MRS. MOLE
FOUR SMALL MOLES	RABBIT
FIVE SMALL RABBITS	MRS. RABBIT
WEASEL	MRS. WEASEL
SIX SMALL WEASELS	RAT
THREE CHILDREN	MABEL
OTHER CHILDREN	

TIME: The Present.

PLACE: The Woods
and Underground

FANTASTIC MR. FOX

SCENE: BOGGIS, BUNCE and BEAN are seated at three tables placed in a line on stage in front of the drawn curtains. They are "frozen." The tables are laden with the appropriate food and drink, ie., chicken, liver paste, doughnuts and cider. Lights are off at this point. CHILDREN enter from back of the hall and are held in a spotlight as they skip, run and laugh up the center aisle, chanting.

CHILDREN.

Boggis and Bunce and Bean,
One fat, one short, one lean,
These horrible crooks,
So different in looks,
Were nonetheless equally mean.

The CHILDREN sit on the steps at the front of the stage. As each FARMER is mentioned, a spotlight pans onto him and he becomes alive, eating or drinking revoltingly.

FIRST CHILD. Let's sit down a minute.

SECOND CHILD. What shall we do? We could go up to the woods and play.

THIRD CHILD. Or we could go down to the river.

FIRST CHILD. Better not. My mom says I'm not to go anywhere near the valley 'cause of those three nasty men. You know the ones - they're always talking together in low whispers and looking over their shoulders to see if anyone's listening. The dreaded Boggis, Bunce and Bean, no less.

SECOND CHILD. My mom says the same. She says not only are they the nastiest farmers in the whole county, they're also the richest. They never spend any money and they pay miserable wages to everyone who works for them. They store all the money they get from selling their chickens and ducks and geese in great padlocked chests.

THIRD CHILD. Which do you think is the worst?

SECOND CHILD. Don't know. They've all got such horrible habits. (The CHILDREN laugh.)

FIRST CHILD. I think old Boggis is the worst. (Spot up on BOGGIS.) He's got absolutely thousands of chickens locked away in those chicken houses. And he's so *fat*. He's got a head like the top of a boiled egg and a bristly, greasy moustache. D'you know, he eats three boiled chickens smothered with dumplings every day for breakfast, lunch and supper? I can just see him eating the chicken legs in his fingers and all the grease getting in his moustache and running down his chin.

CHILDREN. Ugh!

SECOND CHILD. What about that pot-bellied dwarf Bunce, then? (Spot up on BUNCE.) He keeps thousands of ducks and geese. He lives on doughnuts and goose livers. He mashes the livers into a disgusting paste and then stuffs the paste into the doughnuts. It gives him such a tummy ache, he's always in a foul temper. You should see his kitchen - it's filthy, and the stench hits you even before you open the door.

THIRD CHILD. Ah, but I don't believe there can be anyone more disgusting or revolting than old Bean. (Spot up on BEAN.) He's the one that keeps those thousands of turkeys in that orchard full of apples. He's as thin as Boggis is fat - but what's more, he's clever, cleverest of them all. He doesn't eat any food at all, just drinks gallons of strong cider made from all those apples.

And he never washes. His earholes are clogged with all kinds of muck and wax and bits of chewing gum and dead flies . . .

CHILDREN. Stop! Ugh! (They laugh.) No more!

FIRST CHILD. Anyway, I reckon we'd better not go anywhere near their place today. Mom says she saw them in town yesterday. Furious they were, cursing and swearing. Evidently there's some fox that keeps sneaking up in the night and taking all their chickens and ducks and things.

SECOND CHILD. And can't they catch him? I bet they're hopping mad.

THIRD CHILD. Seems not. They keep trying to, of course, but it's a clever old fox. Outwits them night after night.

SECOND CHILD. Good luck to him, I say. Serves them right for being so disgusting. (Laughs. The CHILDREN exit, chanting and chattering as the lights go up onstage.)

BOGGIS (banging down his knife and fork). Dang and blast that lousy beast!

BUNCE. I'd like to rip his guts out!

BEAN (sinisterly). He must be killed.

BOGGIS. Hundreds of chickens have I lost to that sly fox. Night after night, I've gone out after him with my gun and, night after night, has he given me the slip. But I'll get him and when I do, he'll be in that pot, stewing along with the dumplings.

Fox stew, that's what I'll be having. Ha!
Ha!

BUNCE. Not if I get my hands on him first, he won't. I'll be cooking his liver and mashing it up to put in my doughnuts. He'll not be eating many more of my ducks, I'll be telling you. I'll catch him one day - you mark my words! I've got to catch him!

BEAN (coolly). All I want to see is his rotten carcass hanging up in my cellar. Strung up . . . (He savors the picture.) . . . so he can never sneak in and take one of my plump turkeys ever again. He's outwitted us for too long now. He's made absolute fools of us. Every time we get near him, he heads off in the other direction. It's almost as if he smells us on the wind.

BUNCE. Us? How could he smell us? I wash every Friday.

BEAN (moving C, in front of the tables). He must be killed.

BOGGIS (moving C, beside BEAN). But how? How on earth can we catch the thief? (BUNCE joins BOGGIS and BEAN.)

BEAN. I have a plan.

BUNCE. You've never had a decent plan yet.

BEAN. Shut up and listen. Things are a little different now. I have been thinking - an activity unknown to either of you two. Tomorrow night, we'll all hide just outside the hole where the fox lives. We will be

silent. We will be patient. We will wait there until he comes out, then - *bang, bang, bang!*

BUNCE. Very clever, *very* intelligent. Just one thing, first we have to find the hole.

BEAN. That, my dear Bunce, is exactly why I said things were a little different. I have already found it. It's up in the wood on the hill. Hidden, oh so carefully hidden, under a huge tree . . . and there, Mr. Fox, we will be meeting with you tonight. (The lights go out. ALL exit through the curtains.)

SCENE: The curtains open, revealing most of the stage taken up with the inside of the Foxes' hole. At L, there is a door leading out to a steep bank on top of which stands a large tree. The SMALL FOXES are engaged in playing a board game. MRS. FOX is ironing.

SMALL FOX ONE. Your turn. Come on!

SMALL FOX TWO (throwing dice). Six. I move six places - one, two, three, four, five, six. (ALL peer at the board.) Hooray! I'm winning.

SMALL FOX THREE. My turn. (Throws the dice and loses it. ALL scramble about after it.) Bother! It's under your foot.

SMALL FOX FOUR. Look out! It's rolled into the corner. Look!

SMALL FOX THREE. I can't find it. Someone help me. (There is a general melee of fox brushes and paws.)

MRS. FOX (looking up). Now, children, what *are* you doing? It's nearly your bedtime. One of you go and fetch your father's scarf - it's hanging on its peg. Hurry up now. (SMALL FOX ONE goes off R to fetch the scarf.) He's almost ready.

SMALL FOX TWO. Mom, how soon do you think we'll be able to go out with Dad on his expeditions?

SMALL FOX THREE. Do you think it will be soon, Mom? I'd love to see the inside of Boggis' chicken house.

SMALL FOX FOUR. *So* would I.

MRS. FOX. I don't know, dears. It'll be a long time before you're as clever and as cunning as your father. Now pack away your game. (The SMALL FOXES begin to put away the game.)

(MR. FOX enters R, followed by SMALL FOX ONE carrying the scarf. He goes over to a mirror on the wall, takes the scarf, and adjusts it with some finesse.)

MR. FOX. Well, my darling, what shall it be tonight?

MRS. FOX (pondering). I think we'll have a duck tonight. Bring us two fat ducks,

if you please. One for you and me, and one for the children.

MR. FOX (smoothing his whiskers). Ducks it shall be! Bunce's best.

MRS. FOX. Now do be careful!

MR. FOX (going to MRS. FOX and putting his arm around her). My darling, I can smell those goons a mile away. I can even smell one from the other. Boggis gives off the filthy stink of rotten chicken skins. Bunce reeks of goose livers, and as for Bean, the fumes of apple cider hang around him like poisonous gases. (The SMALL FOXES laugh. He goes over and kisses each one in turn.)

SMALL FOX ONE. 'Bye, Dad. Wish I was coming with you.

MR. FOX. And so you shall one day.

SMALL FOX TWO. When, Dad? Will it be soon?

MR. FOX. Soon enough.

SMALL FOX THREE. They'll never, ever catch you, will they, Dad?

MR. FOX. Not if I smell them first, they won't.

SMALL FOX FOUR. I'm going to grow up just as clever as you, Dad.

MRS. FOX (kissing MR. FOX goodbye). Now please, don't you get careless. You know they'll be waiting for you, all three of them.

MR. FOX. Don't you worry about me. (To the SMALL FOXES.) Now you four be good. I'll see you later. (He exits through the door. The lights go out. A spot comes up on MR. FOX. Silence. He carefully climbs up the bank and cautiously looks out over the top. He sniffs, then moves forward very slightly. He sniffs again and edges out to his waist. He sniffs, then hears a rustle and freezes. After a moment, he edges out almost completely. He gives a long, careful look around. *Bang! Bang! Bang!* He disappears immediately down through the door.)

(A spot comes up on BOGGIS, BUNCE and BEAN who appear from behind a tree and look down towards the Foxes' hole.)

BEAN. Did we get him?

BUNCE (stooping down and holding up a tail).

We got the tail, but we missed the fox.

BOGGIS. Dang and blast! We shot too late.

We should have let fly the moment he poked his head out.

BUNCE. He won't be poking it out again in a hurry.

BEAN (taking a swig from his flask). It'll take three days at least before he gets hungry enough to come out again. I'm not sitting here waiting for that. Let's dig him out.

SUGGESTION FOR LAYOUT OF AUDITORIUM:

