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## Badger

Mr Fox and the three remaining Small Foxes dug fast and straight. They were all too excited now to feel tired or hungry. They knew they were going to have a whacking great feast before long and the fact that it was none other than Boggis's chickens they were going to eat made them churgle with laughter every time they thought of it. It was lovely to realize that while the fat farmer was sitting up there on the hill waiting for them to starve, he was also giving them their dinner without knowing it. 'Keep digging,' said Mr Fox. 'It's not much further.'



All of a sudden a deep voice above their heads said, '*Who goes there?*' The foxes jumped. They looked up quickly and they saw, peeking through a small hole in the roof of the tunnel, a long black pointed furry face.



‘Badger!’ cried Mr Fox.

‘Foxy!’ cried Badger. ‘My goodness me, I’m glad I’ve found *someone* at last! I’ve been digging around in circles for three days and nights and I haven’t the foggiest idea where I am!’

Badger made the hole in the ceiling bigger and dropped down beside the foxes. A Small Badger (his son) dropped down after him. ‘Haven’t you *heard* what’s happening up on the hill?’ Badger said excitedly. ‘It’s chaos! Half the wood has disappeared and there are men with guns all over the countryside! None of us can get out, even at night! We’re all starving to death!’

‘Who is *we*?’ asked Mr Fox.

‘All us diggers. That’s me and Mole and Rabbit and all our wives and children. Even Weasel, who can usually sneak out of the tightest spots, is right now hiding down my hole with Mrs Weasel and six kids. What on earth are we going to do, Foxy? I think we’re finished!’

Mr Fox looked at his three children and he smiled. The children smiled back at him, sharing his secret. ‘My dear old Badger,’ he said, ‘this mess you’re in is all my fault ...’

‘I know it’s your fault!’ said Badger furiously. ‘And the farmers are not going to give up till they’ve got you. Unfortunately, that means *us* as well. It means everyone on the hill.’ Badger sat down and put a paw around his small son. ‘We’re done for,’ he said softly. ‘My poor wife up there is so weak she can’t dig another yard.’





‘Nor can mine,’ said Mr Fox. ‘And yet at this very minute she is preparing for me and my children the most delicious feast of plump juicy chickens ...’

‘Stop!’ cried Badger. ‘Don’t tease me! I can’t stand it!’

‘It’s true!’ cried the Small Foxes. ‘Dad’s not teasing! We’ve got chickens galore!’

‘And because everything is entirely my fault,’ said Mr Fox, ‘I invite you to share the feast. I invite *everyone* to share it – you and Mole and Rabbit and Weasel and all your wives and children. There’ll be plenty to go round, I can assure you.’



‘You mean it?’ cried Badger. ‘You *really mean* it?’

Mr Fox pushed his face close to Badger’s and whispered darkly, ‘*Do you know* where we’ve just been?’

‘Where?’

‘Right inside Boggis’s Chicken House Number One!’

‘No!’

‘Yes! But that is nothing to where we are going now. You have come just at the right moment, my dear Badger. You can help us dig. And in the

meanwhile, your small son can run back to Mrs Badger and all the others and spread the good news.' Mr Fox turned to the Small Badger and said, 'Tell them they are invited to a Fox's Feast. Then bring them all down here and follow this tunnel back until you find my home!'

'Yes, Mr Fox!' said the Small Badger. 'Yes, sir! Right away, sir! Oh, thank you, sir!' and he scrambled quickly back through the hole in the roof of the tunnel and disappeared.



### **Retrieval questions**

1. Why didn't the Foxes feel tired or hungry?
2. How did Mr Fox feel when he found Badger and why?
3. Who were the "diggers"?
4. Why is Badger furious at Fox?
5. How does Badger's mood change towards Mr Fox in the chapter?

